Across / A16 — Lapids' probe urged for corruption over quarry industry

Business / B1 — US excludes RP from list of countries eligible for $1.5-B aid

Showbiz / C1 — Blackberry pager: Turning into pop culture staple

News / A2 — American seized with Tarongoy surfaces in video

Tanong mo Bayan / A16 — Singil sa kuryente, dapat bang tasan?

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Poe to get presidential medal, nominated National Artist

By Jerome Aning and Pia Zantua

THE LATE movie actor and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. will receive a presidential medal of merit for his contributions to the film industry, according to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

NCCA Executive Director and Presidential

Joker hits 'anomalous' IPPs' VAT exemptions

By Juliet Labog-Javellana, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Michael Lim Ubac

AS SHE signed the Attrition law of 2005, President Macapagal-Arroyo called yesterday for the earth passage of other revenue measures, including the increase in the rate of the value-added tax (VAT), which is facing stiff opposi-

SIT DOWN, PLEASE: (clockwise) President Arroyo signs the fiscal reform bill into law at the Palace on Tuesday. The 2nd VAT bill reform bills considered crucial to avert a fiscal crisis, the law provides an incentive of 15 percent to the BIR and Customs should they exceed their collections by more than 10 percent of their target. Ms Arroyo is flanked by, from left, Senator Nene, Senate President Drilon, Speaker De Venecia and Deputy Speaker Nachid Mas

Perez quits; GMA accepts

Last of Wall Street boys exits effective March 31

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Abigail L. Ho

IT'S IT the last of the Wall Street boys.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday accepted with regret the resignation of Energy Secretary Vince Perez, one of her longest serving Cabinet members and the last of her original trio of dashing and 'Wall Street-bred' economic managers.

In a statement, the President said she had asked the 46-year old Perez to extend his term until the end of March to make sure that the privatization of National Power Corp. and National Transmission Co. (Transco) would be on track.

Perez himself announced his resignation at a press conference yesterday confirming the rumor that had been making the rounds for the past weeks. But in lighter moments with reporters on Monday evening, when he sang the 1980s song, "Don't You Forget About Me," he perceived an inkling of what was to come.

"I wish to announce that [the President] has graciously granted my request since last year to be allowed to relinquish my post as secretary of energy and return to the private sector effective the end of March 2005," said Perez.

Earlier, the rumor was that Perez would take the place of Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima, who had been assigned to replace Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong by mid-February.

Perez said the main reason for his resignation was neither the rough issues hounding the energy industry nor the pressure coming from members of the legislative branch.

He said that after his last day in office, "the Ms. I mean me may to do list is making up for lost time with my family, especially with my sibling-in-law."

Vicente Perez Jr., 76, is affiliated with Meralco's Lopezes.

Perez was the essential Cabinet official to resign in a month.

It was only on Friday that Amatong and Labor secretary Patricia Santo Tomas announced that they were resigning and would be replaced by Purisima.

Perez simultaneously lauded the initiative taken by Vice Pacific top investment bankers who take an

PEREZ, Wharton educated, sings "Don't You Forget About Me" in his valedictory

Miriam: 'Kitchen too hot' for Vince

By Christine O. Avendaño

ENERGY Secretary Vince Perez might have decided to leave the government because of business dealings pursued from certain quarters in connection with the privatization of National Power Corp., Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago said yesterday.

"My suspicion as a former bureaucrat is that he found the kitchen too hot," Santiago said in response to Perez's announcement.

"He must have been under very severe pressure from power

JUMPING "Jamelle" in action: Environment Secretary Mike Defensor heads a raid on the R2 Manila Harbor Center in Tondo, where he discovers another shipment of allegedly hot logs

Mike to Jamby: No apology, only reconciliation

By Nikko Dizon and Michael Lim Ubac

AFTER being called a "jamelle" in the Senate where an opposition lawmaker demanded his resignation, Environment Secretary Michael Defensor said he would quit only if he thought he had failed in his duty.

Defensor (above) no sign he was saying as in the snafu call used by Sen. Jamby Madrigal who, in a scathing privilege speech Monday, lambasted the secretary for saying her family was involved in logging in the Sierra Madre.

He just outlined his combative tone in an offer of "reconciliation" to Madrigal without issuing a formal apology.

Madrigal yesterday rejected the reconciliation overture from the environment chief.

"I would like a genuine offer of reconciliation but not an offer of reconciliation to the media," said the senator.

"I can understand where she's coming from, but of course I serve at the pleasure of the Pres-

He fought Reds, plotters; quits war vs loggers

By Pia Zantua

A FORMER soldier who fought communist rebels, coup plotters and drug lords without flinching has decided to call it quits as provincial adviser to the war against illegal loggers.

Retired brig. gen. Victor Corpus said yesterday he was relinquishing his duties in the campaign against illegal logging because he wanted to "frame an environment project."

"Reforestation is really my line," Corpus, who is holding on to his reforestation job, told the Inquirer.

He said retired Maj. Gen. Alexander Balutan, who served as head the Southern Luzon Command (Solcom), would now be on the

HOT on Defensor's trail, Sen. Jamby Madrigal is not any closer to burying the hatchet, unless it's stained in Defensor's back.

Pardaya, por diyes, porsyento, jesuits compile graft lingo

By Armando N. Nonan and Jerome Aning

DON'T be a "talamaskero."

Report those who engage in "pardaya," "dar-por-dar" and "bit, YOU" bjerkely if the "transshipping" happens to be a "kanglagonaman."

"amazing" or "roundabout."

Don't speak the secret lingo that would like us from

Poor man returns money he needed for very sick son

By Aquilino Z. Zante
CDN Mindanao Bureau

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—It was a choice between extreme and his sick son's life.

Darwin Cabunoc, 35, was in dire need of money for the operation of his 2-year old son. Last year, the boy was diagnosed with an incipient brain tine and cerebral and he needs a cholecystectomy operation on the pancreas for life.

Like his father, Cabunoc was to spend day after day as his son's chances of surviving were becoming slimmer. From his residence in a Gayde district, Cabunoc had no way of raising the money needed for the operation.

But then another family fell on his lap.

On Sunday, Jan. 23, Cabunoc found a bag left by a passenger in the back seat of his tricycle.

RP solons slam new US spy teams

By Christine O. Avendaño

TOP LAWMAKERS in the Philippines and the United States yesterday questioned the creation by Washington of new battlefield spy teams for clandestine missions, including counter-terrorism operations, in foreign countries.

Senate Minority leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. expressed concern over the move by the US Department of Defense, and backed a proposal by opposition Sen. Rodolfo Biazon for the setting up of an "oversight intelligence committee" to look into the report.

Pimentel called for an inquiry into the creation of the new US espionage units while citing the case of an American who left the country in May 2003 while facing charges of possessing an explosive in Davao.

Pimentel related the case of one Michael Meiring who was later killed a bomb exploded in his hotel room in Davao. He said he found it curious that three US Federal Bureau of Investigation agents and the US vice consul visited Meiring in the hospital.

"There exists an individual would attract the attention of FBI agents and the vice consul," he added.

After being shelled-out from the hospi-

A3
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

Bro. Eddie: Estafa case Mike's revenge

By Blanche S. Rivera
and Juliet Labog-Javellana

FACED with an estafa charge, preacher Bro. Eddie Villanueva yesterday accused First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo of orchestrating a "political vendetta" against him for refusing to publicly declare support for the Arroyo administration.

Villanueva, founding director of the Jesus is Lord Church Worldwide who ran and lost in last year's presidential elections, said the administration was using Arroyo's businessman cousin, Benito Antonio, to harass him, his family and the Bangon Pilipinas party.

Arroyo, who represents the Entertainment Network, charged Villanueva with estafa by misrepresentation, a criminal offense, before the Mandaluyong court for allegedly defrauding him in a business deal involving the 30-managed Zoe TV.

Villanueva received the summons from the Mandaluyong City prosecutor's office last November.

"Mrs. Arroyo, is this the price I have to pay for being in the opposition?" Villanueva said in a press conference at the Zoe TV studio yesterday.

The camp of the First Gentleman, however, said Villanueva's allegations were ridiculous.

"Bro. Eddie was used by the First Gentleman's cousin, not by Mr. Arroyo or the President. The two concern a business transaction, not politics," said Jesus Ano, Arroyo's lawyer. "It is totally illogical and unfair, therefore, to describe the issue as political harassment."

Ramos said the President and her husband had no reason to harass the 28, insofar because Mr. Arroyo had already won the election.

"Bro. Eddie professes himself to be a man of God. But as we all know, any of the most sacred commandments of the Almighty is close shall not deter Bro. Eddie against thy neighbor," Ramos said.

The evangelist said he did not understand how Arroyo could charge him with estafa when it was Ramos that owed Zoe TV almost P300 million in airtime costs and the balance of the agreed upon goodwill money for the joint venture.

Villanueva said Secretary of Justice Raul Gonzalez had already ordered a joint venture agreement with Zoe TV to operate Channel 11 on March 2003 and pledged to give goodwill money amounting to P100 million for the joint venture and to upgrade Zoe TV's transmission.

Villanueva said he was "persuaded" to sign the agreement after speaking with the First Gentleman on the phone twice. He said Arroyo confirmed that Arroyo was his cousin and vouched for Arroyo's character and sincerity in working with Zoe TV.

The joint venture agreement between Zoe TV and Ramos was signed in June 2003 in Malacañang, with President Macapagal-Arroyo herself as a witness, the evangelist recalled.

However, however, allegedly paid only P86 million of the P1.00 million goodwill money and withdrew from the joint venture company that would manage Channel 11.

Zoe TV managing director Monte Villanueva Ingles said his network did not want Zoe TV's 40 percent share of the net income as agreed upon by the two companies in the case, pero naman.

He also said Ramos shared in the operational expenses of Channel 11 only in the first three months of operation, leaving Zoe TV to pay the salaries of 113 employees. The contract was terminated in July 2002.

Arroyo, however, maintained that Ramos had spent more than P300 million on Zoe TV and that it was Villanueva who refused to relinquish management of Channel 11 to the joint venture company Ore Entertainment.

Villanueva said Zoe TV had assured its 30-a week to compel Ramos to pay the remaining P50 million balance in goodwill money and the P114,000,000 in airtime costs, but the filing fee of 25 million was too big for the case to prosper.

Villanueva said an emissary of former Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo met with him last year and assured him that they would "take care" of the case in solving its woes following a political reconciliation with the President.

ARROYO

VILLANUEVA

Lawyers say judiciary more corrupt

By Dono Z. Pazalbugar

MORE lawyers nowadays complain of corruption in the judicial system compared to 10 years ago, according to the Social Weather Stations.

One out of two lawyers know of a trial judge in their city or province who has taken a bribe but they did not report it because they could not prove it, said the SWS.

In a briefing among lawyers last night, PBS president Mahar Mangahas said the perception of corruption in the various courts—from the municipal trial courts all the way up to the Supreme Court—has been among lawyers in the last 10 years.

"The lawyers are more critical now than before," Mangahas said the survey findings for the first time.

The SWS polled 889 trial judges—or 52 percent of all trial judges in the country—and 400 lawyers from November 30 to July 2004 to get their perceptions on various aspects of the judicial system.

The last such survey was undertaken by SWS from 1994 to 1996.

"Corruption remains a major problem," the SWS said in a print announcement.

"As in 1995, one-fourth of present lawyers say that many or very many judges are corrupt. Although half or 49 percent say that many or very many judges are corrupt in their city or province where a judge took a bribe, only 9 percent said they reported the bribery. The main excuse of those who kept silent is that they could not prove it," the SWS said.

Among judges, only 7 percent said that many or very many judges were corrupt.

The SWS said the judges' perception of the extent of corruption among court personnel was the same as in 1995.

"What has increased is the proportion of judges seeing many lawyers as corrupt," it said.

Mangahas said the survey showed that corruption "remains a serious problem in the judicial system but it is not endemic."

"They're saying there's nothing to be done about [corruption] but it's not rampant. There's still the ideal, sure," he said.

Logging did not cause calamity, says expert

By Marlon Ramos
Phil Inquirer Luzon Bureau

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—While government officials are making barks or who is to blame for the December landslides in Luzon, a team of forestry experts from the University of the Philippines Los Baños, yesterday said logging, land conversion and other human activities in the province that left over 1,000 people dead.

Elena Peralta, director of the Forest Development Center (FDC) at UPLB, said that contrary to the widespread notion that logging concessionaires were responsible for the landslides that killed 1,126 people, illegal loggers were the real cause of the incident.

"So far as the FDC is concerned, logging was definitely not the cause of the landslides and floods that happened in Quezon. Instead of logging, it was a combination of so many factors," Peralta told the Inquirer in an interview at his office.

Among these, he said, was the natural geologic structure of the area and the continuous heavy rains prior to the incident.

Peralta, who is also an environment lawyer, said the clamor of some government officials for the enforcement of forestry laws was also to blame for the disaster.

He said these conclusions were reached after a 15-man FDC team visited the flood-ravaged area last week to look into the cause of the Dec. 1 floods and the subsidence of areas there.

The team, which Peralta himself headed, was sent by Dean Ramon Razal of the College of Forestry and Natural Resources (CFNR) at UPLB.

Peralta said Razal had asked the center to take a formal stand on the logging issue that continued to make headlines less months after the Dec. 1 disaster.

The FDC's official account of the incident was summed up in a two-page report. It said: "Sustainable forest management is what the Philippine forest needs."

Peralta said the center was the product of two years of studies by FDC members and their 13 members of the college.

Peralta...who also teaches forest laws, resource use policies and forest governance at UPLB—said they intend to present their paper to Environment Secretary Michael Defensor and Philippine Forest Corporation to help unify.

"Is logging the main cause of landslides? The problems of forest destruction are very complex and deforestation could not be attributed to a single cause," the group said in its report.

The report added: "Forest has to attributed to land use conversion, illegal logging, kaingin making, forest fires, pests and diseases, [construction sites."

Peralta, however, maintained that Defensor was going in the right direction investigating logging activities in Quezon, Aurora and Nueva Ecija.

"Somebody has to explain why there are so many logs that were aircft after the floods, considering that no TLAs (timber license agreements) were issued in the area. So I have no doubt that the remaining logs is a main concern here," he said.

Created in 1979 under the supervision of the CFNR, the FDC is involved in reviewing and formulating government policy in forest management and other environment issues.

Rush to open Naia 3 worries foreign airlines

By Nikko Dizon

FOREIGN airline operators are worried that the government's rush to open the controversial Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) Terminal 3 by June 21 could compromise safety, security and the standard of service they provide their clients from all over the world.

"We ask the government to give us a reasonable time to construct our offices and prepare for the services that we have promised our clients. Each airline has a standard of service, which is different. If our requirements are not satisfied, we may be faced with numerous complaints and suits," Ed Monreal, liaison chair of the Airline Operators Council (AOC) and station manager of Cathay Pacific, told reporters yesterday.

AOC officials led by its chair, Leonelo Nalupil, security head of Gulf Air, vice-chair Santiago Medrano III, Lufthansa station manager, and Monreal, have been briefing voice-weekly Operational Readiness for Airport Terminal Transfer meetings with airport officials to discuss the details of the transfer of 29 foreign airlines from Naia Terminal 1 to Naia Terminal 3.

After their meeting yesterday, the AOC officials said that the airlines would be racing against time if the airport opening is not postponed to a later date.

AOC officials said they want to hold a dialogue with President Macapagal-Arroyo to air their concerns and explain their misgivings over the tight work schedule given to them.

Nalupil said the President might not be fully aware of the problems the foreign carriers are facing with the preparations for the opening of Naia Terminal 3.

"We are worried that everything is being rapidly mobilized. In the end, our operations could be messed up," Medrana said.

Nalupil added: "We are cooperating with the June deadline. We know we have to move but we think there should be more room."

AOC officials said foreign airlines would spend an estimated P500 million for reinforcement investments for their transfer to Naia Terminal 3.

With only four and a half months to go before June, AOC officials and airlines have yet to start with the construction of their office spaces and passenger lounges, installation of their equipment, and just about everything they need to make them fully functional in an airline service.

Nalupil said airport officials informed them that lease contracts would be issued on Feb. 4.

However, the AOC is not certain if the contracts would maintain the foreign airlines' earlier agreements with the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) on office spaces, check-in counter allocations, and locations of passenger lounges among others.

Nalupil said the AOC prefers that the airport management, headed by airport general manager Alfonso Cusi, honor the foreign airlines' agreements with Piatco prior to the opening and construction. The AOC is also wary that the entry of national carrier Philippine Airlines into Naia Terminal 3 would also affect the earlier agreements with Piatco.

Marcos too ill to order Ninoy killing–Imelda

THE WIDOW of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos said yesterday her husband could not have masterminded the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr. in 1983 because he was too ill following a failed kidney transplant.

"When Apalisok was assassinated, he (Marcos) was in bed very seriously ill on account of that failed operation which left him without a functioning kidney," Imelda Marcos said in a statement released by Presidia Bienvida Arzaga, the chief of the Public Attorney's Office who has pushed to reopen the Aquino murder trial.

The Aquino family and the entire liberal groups believe the first couple and the former dictator was never involved.

The assassination triggered massive protests that culminated three years later in the "people power" uprising that ousted Marcos and installed Corazon Aquino, Corazon, as the new president.

Imelda Marcos' statements included an allegation that she plan to kill Aquino may have involved a US surgeon who performed her husband's kidney transplant. She said the surgeon failed to obtain prior ruling that caused Marcos to fall into a coma for several days after the operation.

"At hindsight, the inexplicable failure of the American surgeon to apply the vital antirejection drug... may have been a deliberate effort on the part of the opportunists and opportunists to prevent the Marcos administration from securing the safe arrival of Senator Aquino.

"It may have been part of the grand conspiracy to remove succession of the administration of the late President," she said.

She didn't identify any of the alleged conspirators.

Aquino's murder was initially blamed on alleged communist hitman Rolando Galman, who was at the airport at the time and was killed by the soldiers just after Aquino was shot. A court, however, later cleared him of responsibility.

Fifteen soldiers were later convicted of murdering both Galman and Aquino.

Arzaga last year filed a motion urging the Supreme Court to reopen the case after a new witness surfaced claiming he saw Galman shoot Aquino.

She said the statement from Marcos' widow would support her appeal for a retrial.

"There is still a mystery in the death of Mr. Aquino that must be unveiled so the people will know the truth," she said. AP

Gov't team flies to Norway to push for talks with Reds

By TJ Burgonio

A TEAM of high-level government officials led by Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo left last night for Europe to convince Norway to resume stalled talks between the government and the communist rebels.

Joining Romulo in the six-day swing to the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Norway are Secretary Teresita Deles, presidential adviser on the peace process, and Norberto Gonzales, president and chief of staff.

Talks to arrive at a peace pact between the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines have been held up since August last year, when the United States removed its terror tag on the CPP and its military arm, the New People's Army.

"We have to contact the CEF (CPP-NPA) panel talks, and we went to Joma Sison. They have been facilitating the discussion between the two groups," Romulo said at a press briefing.

In the Netherlands, the team's first stop, Romulo said they will update Dutch officials on efforts by the Arroyo administration to secure a ceasefire with the guerrillas, who have been fighting to establish a communist state since 1969.

The team will also discuss the status of Jose Maria Sison, founder of the CPP, who is living in self-exile in the Dutch city of Utrecht. Sison's application for political asylum had been denied and the courts in the Netherlands had received his request for that of a political refugee.

"We will convey to the Dutch government the long-standing position of the Philippine government that Mr. Sison need not fear political persecution in the Philippines," he said.

"Mr. Sison is free to join the many other former rebels who have decided to institute change through peaceful means through our political processes," he added, noting that some former rebels had even become lawmakers.

There was no guarantee, however, from Romulo that Sison, who carries a P10-million bounty on his head, will not be arrested or charged in court if he returns to the Philippines.

Romulo said the Philippine government would not go so far as asking the European Union to delist Sison, the CPP and the NPA from its list of foreign terror organizations.

"The listing of certain organizations is because of their own acts, by their own acts. They can delist the delisting by their own acts," he said.

In Brussels, the officials will meet with Belgian and European Union officials to discuss the issue of development assistance for post-conflict areas. Romulo said, citing EU's long history of active support for areas stricken with conflict around the world.

"We hope to increase their commitment and involvement in the various of our own peace process by looking to development assistance programs that would benefit former combatants and rebuild post-conflict areas once we have conducted our peace agreements." With AFP reports

Widow of Kalibo amok-cop wants his body autopsied

By Carlo F. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

KALIBO (2/7)—The widow of the policeman who went on a murderous rampage in Kalibo, Aklan, shooting five Abu sillians fatally has asked the National Bureau investigation to autopsy his remains.

Mrs. Rachel Morelle told the reporter that the Abu municipal officer report showed that her husband, PO3 Jonathan Morelle, died of gunshot wounds in the left and right sides of his abdomen.

She, however, noticed that his outfit is had many bullet holes in the back and in the bottom, as if the police or persons who shot him intended to finish him off.

Morelle's remains are lying at their home in Tobias, Negros Occidental.

"We have not buried him yet because we want to know how he was killed," she said.

His remains arrived in Negros Occidental on Jan. 18, two days after he went on a shooting rampage. Seven persons, including the Aklan police director and the Kalibo police chief, were killed while 11 others were wounded.

The Philippine National Police, however, is exploring the possibility of granting Morelle burial honors and death benefits.

That is, if investigators and psychiatrists find that Morelle was driven to do what he did by extreme pressure exerted by fellow officers working for alleged drug trafficker Roy Candra, according to Director Arturo Lomibao, Task Force Kalibo chief.

"Even in civilian courts, the accused is acquitted when it is found out that he was suffering from temporary insanity," Lomibao told reporters at a press conference.

If he is acquitted, Morelle would most likely receive death benefits from the PNP, he said.

A major lynch in the ongoing investigation is whether he was in fact a "hero or villain," the official said.

Lomibao acknowledged reports that Morelle might have run berserk due to intense pressure from fellow officers trying to bribe him to withdraw as the star witness in the case against Candra.

Francia and family members told police that Morelle had been expecting a promotion for his role in the arrest of Candra in 2003.

PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay said on Monday that Morelle could not be promoted because he lacked civil service eligibility.

In the meantime, Lomibao said the PNP was sure to shut his mouth on Morelle.

"It will be up to the Aklan provincial commander," he said.

Sen. Manuel Villar, chair of the Senate committee on public order and illegal drugs, meanwhile, said Morelle's rampage "dramatizes a possible collusion between drug lords and the police." With Christine Avanceña and Michael Lim Ubac

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METRO
Editor Ester C. Ogsayagil ■ Assistant Editor Carmen B. Bitoc

A TEACHER and a student walk past a building destroyed by fire at the Graciano Bautista Elementary School campus in San Miguel, Manila. EDGAR ALBERO

Fires hit Manila school, Caloocan

By Tarra K. Quismundo and Edwin C. Quiros Jr.

A FORTY-SEVEN-year-old public grade school in an old Manila district was partially destroyed when a two-hour fire swept through three buildings on the campus Monday evening.

While nobody was hurt in the incident, the fire, which started at 11:30 p.m., destroyed 22 classrooms at the Graciano Bautista Elementary School on Sipatuhonan Street, San Miguel.

"I opened to fire," said school principal Irene Cayag. "One security guards and maintenance personnel discovered smoke, but when they broke around to investigate, the fire was already too big to control."

Arson investigators estimated that the fire destroyed classrooms inside two-story buildings and the one-floor kindergarten building worth around P6 million.

The blaze was put out before it reached the administration offices, but only after damaging three buildings. Firefighters, who responded with 78 government and volunteer fire trucks, prevented the blaze from spreading to the principal's office, the social hall and other offices inside the administration building, and another two-story structure housing eight classrooms for Grade 5 students.

Cayag said three of the school's roving personnel had just finished doing rounds of the school premises before midnight on Monday when they were alarmed by the smell of smoldering burning behind a room area where old wooden desks were stored.

Fire Senior Inspector Ariel Rodriguez of the Manila Bureau of Fire Protection said they were looking into the possibility that the storage area could have been the possible source of the fire.

He also told investigators that a head principal had warned each district public school principals about a threat to set fire to a school in either San Miguel, Sta. Mesa, Bambakan or Sta. Ana.

Meanwhile, more than 100 houses were razed after a fire hit a wooden slum area at the bank of the SM North mall in Quezon City yesterday afternoon.

Investigators said the fire started in one of the houses on owners Medardo and Concepcion Severa, the mga Severa Magayang located near the mall.

In Caloocan City, more than P5 million worth of raw materials and equipment for making plastics were up in smoke in a fire that razed the Wynnsize Realty warehouse yesterday.

Ex-general, 2 Nida friends face new probe

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice (DOJ) will serve subpoenas today to former military intelligence chief Eduardo Kintanar and two women close to her actress Hilda Bianca as it re-opens the investigation into the murder.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said subpoenas would be issued for Kintanar, former chief of the fourth precinct Service of the Philippine Integration Bianca with Hilda de la Paz, and Sister San Jose de la Paz, a second cousin of Kaye Tuvera, Bianca's daughter.

"Based on the evidence that we have, they may be involved in this case," Gonzalez said during a press conference yesterday.

He said that a DOJ panel led by State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño Monday would subject them to preliminary investigation by Feb. 5.

"It does not mean that they are guilty. That is why we are conducting the preliminary investigation—to hear what they have to say," Gonzalez said.

Government witness Rizalyn Pinzon has positively identified Ilona de la Paz as the woman who, together with two men, bridged Bianca from the Atlanta Centre hotel-ring bearer before she was murdered, Gonzalez said.

He said Kintanar should explain his "close relationship" with accused Philip Medel and engineer Nicolas "Cesar" Williams. Gonzalez said the two men called Bianca on a month before she was killed on Nov. 7, 2003.

He said the DOJ wanted Dibar to explain why she bought the airplane tickets of Red Strzok, Bianca's husband and principal suspect in the case, before he left the country for the United States on Jan. 20, 2003.

Tuvera and her lawyer Harriet Demetillo, who were at the press conference, said they were glad about the reopening of the case and that they had given Gonzalez a Dec. 7 letter on the investigation.

"My main goal is to achieve truth and justice in [Cesar's] case," Tuvera said.

Demetillo said Pinzon's statement was "full of lies."

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Jail-for-jaywalkers rapped

FINE, but don't arrest them.

Lawyer Ernesto Francisco yesterday asked the Supreme Court to stop the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority from detaining jaywalkers on prison buses.

He said that there was no law which provides that pedestrians may be detained or imprisoned only for jaywalking.

Instead, Francisco said, an unauthorized jaywalker should be issued a traffic violation receipt or charged the P150 penalty.

The lawyer earlier asked the court to also stop the MMDA's wheel clog scheme.

Both the deployment of the prison bus and the wet flag scheme, which uses a drenched blanket, are aimed at keeping pedestrians off roads and away from accidents. Philip C. Tubeza

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MetroBriefs

Cheap van gives thief away

THE CHEAP van was too cheap at P40,000 as it aroused suspicions, leading to the arrest of Wilfredo Ng, 38, of Mangaldan, West Central Pangasinan police allegedly Sto. Rosario, Paul Mendoza said interrogation got suspicious and

Planning to write a book?

A SEMINAR on how to write a book will be held on Jan. 29, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Bukidnon by the NTF

UST Batch 75 homecoming

THE UNIVERSITY of Santo Tomas elementary and high school Batch '75 will be commemorating their First Homecoming today starting at 7PM. The UST Hermandad Hall and

Bahay Bahay Mission's new officers

THE SAFING Bahay Lodge No. 23 of Iwa and accepted masons will hold its installation of officers for Masonic year 6 (5005) on Jan. 29, at 4 p.m. at the Jacinto-Zobel Jaegnon Masonic Temple on Bacolod-Bad St., Barangay Villegas, Bacolod City. Heading the officers to be installed by VW Leandro B. Rufin Jr. are Master C. Mendez II, Worship Master Ricardo B. Montilla, Senior Warden and Eduardo E. Alcaraz Junior Warden Alejandro C. Cortazar, John D. Lamas,

elected there about Sinonoy, who was trying to sell fake yen in Barangay Bambang. Police later discovered that he was with Nonoy after P97,117 was stolen from Corazon Perdigueron in Angeles. Read. Leigh A. del Puerto

Speakers Network

For more details, please call either Ricky Arias at telephone no. 896-8780.

Ferry run returns to Metro

By Maryjoe C. Ortiz

METRO Manila commuters will soon have an alternative means of making the busy journey or taxi with the arrival of the Pasig River ferry service.

"The government has decided to push through with the project," said Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando, who also co-chairs the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC).

Fernando said the PRRC, MMDA and Department of Transportation and Communication will be signing a memorandum of agreement today to establish the interoperability of agencies that would be involved in the ferry service revival. Twelve companies have expressed interest in the project's operations, he added.

Magsaysay Lines and Starcraft Ferry Corp., former operators of the Pasig ferry line, ceased operations because of the river's foul odor and dirty waters, Fernando said, adding that Starcraft also ran into financial and management problems.

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2001
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SPORTS

WARREN Charles Jolly of Magnolia passes after Arwind Santos under pressure from Welmark's Eugene Tan during their game yesterday

Montaña five gains finals

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE MONTAÑA Jewels are in the finals for the first time in seven long years and coach Robert Sison knows it isn't because of just seven crown players.

"It was a total team effort," said Sison after the Jewels swept the Granny Goose Textiles, 67-63, yesterday in the semifinals of the PBL Open Championship at the Makati Coliseum. "We let players stepped up in this game. They responded to my call and fit in perfect chemistry."

GAMES TOMORROW
(Rizal Coliseum)
3:00 p.m. — Welcoat vs Magnolia Ice

Veterans Jun Dan Salvador, Al Mojares and Alex Compton led Montaña's charge in the fourth quarter to subdue the Textiles.

Montaña will dispute the crown against the winner of the other semis between Welcoat and Magnolia (WG) on Thursday.

Welcoat held Magnolia FIL to just two points in the last four minutes in the other game and forced a do-or-die showdown with a 69-66 victory.

"The team's morale is different after I told them that it's not impossible to win against Magnolia two-in-two," said coach Caloy Garcia, whose charges snapped the Wheels' 10-game winning run.

Compton and Pingris helped the Jewels to a 62-53 lead going into the last two minutes, but Jovitas Gotchu rallied the Textiles to within 69-65. The Textiles had a chance to force overtime, but Abby Santos missed an underpeal shot, two-to-tie left.

WINNERS!
Monthly Winners
Antonio Francisco ₱ 100, 000.00
Guadarene Subdivision
Catabangan, Zamboanga City
Mag reggalo ti, bantir ng Petron Ultron at Rev-X at baka kayo na ang susunod na manalo!

Perez quits; GMA accepts

Front page A1

ousted ex-offic Erap Mr. to Inya in 2001 to be trade undersecretary.

It was his way of showing gratitude to his former mentor, who had written the letter of recommendation that allowed him to study in the United States.

Mr. Inya had been particularly proud of the looks and educational backgrounds of her front-line economic managers, Perez claimed "Alan" Ibon, as if [illegible] were a trade secretary and [illegible] Jose Isidro Camacho [illegible] as finance secretary in 2000—who, she claimed, had helped her in presenting the Philippines as a good investment site during [illegible] conditions.

Personal sacrifice

The President thanked Perez for his "personal financial sacrifice during his four years of dedicated service to the department," and for shepherding the country through "difficult" power crises, [illegible] the privatization of [illegible] keeping Luzon blackout-free since 2002, addressing the power supply problems in the Visayas and Mindanao, increasing the use of indigenous energy resources, and forging power-related alliances with other countries.

But she failed to thank him for taking all the things and arrows from lawmakers and the public, refusing from the government's removal of Napocor officials, selection of studies based exclusively [illegible] rejection of appeals to keep oil prices from rising.

Unappreciated?

A source said Perez had long wanted to leave his post because he felt unappreciated for his efforts. The source said Perez was forced to stay in office much longer than he wanted to because there were no takers for the post in view of the surprise oil and power crisis and opposition, to the sale of Napocor's assets.

Mr. Arroyo promised to announce Perez's replacement "in the appropriate time," Inc., according to a source, her choice list of nominees include Finance CEO Alan Dirla and Alejandro del Rosario and Rafael Lotilla, former and [illegible] chiefs of Puerto Bocon Authority (Ipa) and Management Corp. (PAALM), respectively.

PALM is the state agency assigned to oversee the privatization of dozens of Napocor power plants and its nationwide power transmission grid.

Lessons learned

Dirla said he had not been able to spend much time with his family since he took on the energy portfolio.

By going back to the private sector, he said, he hopes to spend more time with his father, "maybe take him sailing because he enjoys that."

Calls would be another secretary to return to or when he has more time on his hands, he said.

The Wharton-schooled Perez said he learned a few things during his stint as energy secretary. Among these, he said, was effective communication, particularly with the masses and the country folk.

He said that with his involvement in the government's rural electrification efforts, he learned not only to speak fluent Filipino but also to communicate with people from all walks of life, particularly those in the lower income brackets.

"I got an opportunity to see the countryside, to see that there are many less-fortunate Filipinos out there," he said. "I also saw what works and does not work in the [illegible]

Moving on

In the question of whether he would consider another post in the government, Perez said his only desire now was to go back to the private sector.

He reiterated his wish to spend more time with his family and with himself, and said he had no plans or commitment at present to join a specific firm.

Mr. Arroyo had no name close who were in the running for his post, saying only that those being considered were "all familiar with the energy sector."

He refused to confirm or deny that Lotilla and Dirla were on the short list.

Achievement

As energy secretary, Perez led efforts to reform the power industry, by law with Republic Act No. 9136 (the Electric Power Industry Reform Act or EPIRA) in 2001.

It was also during his term that the Philippines achieved a 56-percent energy self-sufficiency rate by end-2004, up from only 45 percent in 2000. — with a report [illegible] Reuters

House bats for Lapus as new trade secretary

By Carlito Pablo

LAWMAKERS from the majority and minority blocs in the House are pushing Rep. Jesli Lapus (NPC, Turlac) as replacement for Trade Secretary Cesar Perez[illegible], who is poised to take over the [illegible] post today.

Asked in comments, Lapus, a former bank executive who chairs the House ways and means committee, said he was both "grateful and humbled" by the support of his colleagues, and that he was willing to serve.

But he added: "Let's wait for the President, if she thinks I can best serve at this critical time."

Among those reportedly being considered by President Macapagal-Arroyo to head the Department of Trade and Industry are [illegible] Ramon Jacinto, president of Nestlé, and Roberto Magdangan, chief executive of the Philippine International Trade Center and former governor of Bulacan.

House Majority Leader Rep. Prospero Nograles (Lakas, Davao City) said Lapus had an "impressive track record in the private sector and in public governance."

"He may be the missing link in the ongoing reorganization of the Arroyo administration's economic team," Nograles said.

In the opinion of fellowship leader Rep. Francis Escudero (NPC, Sorsogon), Lapus has "proven himself to have a good grasp of economic issues."

Lapus himself said even Rep. Prospero Pichay (Lakas, Surigao del Sur) was pushing for his appointment to the DTI.

Pichay, co-chair of the powerful Commission on Appointments, is known to be close to the First Couple.

Bobby Tañada

Rep. Abraham Mitra (LP, Palawan) suggested the appointment of Magbetto "Bobby" Tañada, a former senator and campaign manager for the late Commission vice Commissioner George Arroyo, who is due to retire on Feb. 22.

Mitra described Tañada—a Harvard-trained lawyer, former chair of the Liberal Party and [illegible]—as "the most logical choice to head the post-[illegible] BOC—a "incorruptible."

"The scoundrels crooks can't run circles around him because he knows the agency. He's a 'boots-to-toes, dono-that' guy. He's got the institutional memory," Mitra said.

Should the President choose to replace Public Works Secretary Florante Soriquez, Undersecretary Manuel Bonoan is the next, according to Mitra.

He described Bonoan as "very competent in local and foreign-assisted projects, personnel relations, politics and operations."

Perdaya, por diyes, porsyento, Jesuits compile . . .

Front page A1

Tam to the selected glossary of graft and corruption.

It's in the book, "Hunit A Manual for Deepening Involvement to Combating Corruption," an antigraft manual published by the Commission on the Evangelization of Culture (CEC) of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus (PSJ).

The book, some Fr. Bames (in tongue S.J. in his foreword, is the "Philippine Jesuits' contribution to the struggle against corruption in the Philippines."

Indigenous terms

"The indices of corruption" has developed its own intricate vocabulary, which can be gleaned from this glossary of decorative and indigenous terms and non-[illegible] corruption," he wrote.

The JSU hopes that knowledge of the graft vocabulary "could help in the sensitization process by identifying and labeling the various forms and manifestations of corruption."

Among the selected new terms—in addition to the now familiar AC-DC (attack-collect-defend-collect), [illegible] buwis (point-sharing), kickback and lotong (bribe)—are the following:

"Bibo (bribery)" is a "direct and relevant collaborator to corrupt transactions."

Bodega was coined from the words pa-dako and pondo to connote who conduct "illegal claims of per diem without actual travel and attendance to assigned activity."

Ipis-per-diyes is running in a circle, "with a name assigned from what was originally received in unofficial transaction."

"Ita 15/30" refers to employees "who only report for work during payday."

Other ways to cheat

Those who do days time record (DTR) are employees who misrepresent their daily time records, oftentimes requesting co-employees to punch them in even if they are not around.

"Main event" is "when cash is delivered to journalists after a press conference," while dalot refers to media members "pocketing part of the money intended for distribution to reporters," and balut (lump on the head) is "when reporters don't get the money intended for them."

"Mor la barang" refers to golfers in government who prefer an air of responsibility with their expensive clothes or "responsible position in government."

Smoking and suspension are senators and congressmen who extract or give long [illegible].

Consultancies from the "payo" consultant is a "professional for hire whose immediate and paramount consideration is accepting projects or contracts in the money corer and above the ability to carry out the allotted tasks."

Kotsabahe is a connection of the Filipino term for commiche and Judas [judas]. These are members of city or municipal councils who many functions of local government agencies in charge of implementing projects and programs in order to obtain kickbacks and commissions.

Finally, there is Ito diyes pesoyanis which comes from the religious expression for "Jesus Christ," but which refers to the standard 30-percent kickback officials get for awarding a project contract to a bidder or for transaction accomplished.

You've got mail

Honorable, Paumanore Cenen al Dario Bama has started cleaning house.

The former chair of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission-cil Philippine Postal Corp. of course-pant personnel who openly violation of 172 administrative cases, some of which had been pending for more than a decade.

The case involving mail pilferage, collection short-changing and other acts of dishonesty were resolved by the PPC's legal department within a 90-day deadline.

In fact, 31 erring personnel had been dismissed, 2 suspended, 1 reprimanded, 31 fined, and 7 had been forced to resign.

"We will not tolerate corruption among our personnel," [illegible] PPC chief executive officer, told the bayanan in an interview.

Don't have committee

He rejected the appeals for reconsideration of dismissed employees and immediately sent the cases to the Office of the Ombudsman for criminal prosecution.

"It was not easy. Some of them had been with the PPC for the past 30 years. They were grandparents or about to retire, some whose families would surely suffer," Nuesa said.

He added that the speedy resolutions of the cases were done by the PPC's legal department and not by a special committee or body to wire the practice in many government agencies.

"I do not believe in committees. If you want to delay something, you form a committee. Me? I just give a deadline," Nuesa said.

Delaying case

He explained that cases tended to "sleep" at the PPC as some erring personnel colluded with members of the judge the case until the employees retired or until the prescription for the offense expired.

Miriam . . .

Front page A1

[illegible] solicitors, power brokers, not necessarily politicians, in connection with the private-sector presence."

Santiago said she herself felt such pressure only yesterday, when a public official tried to convince her to accept the suspended winning bidder in the sale of the coal-fired plant in Masinloc, Zambales.

The senator had earlier questioned the rush in awarding the Masinloc plant to the group NPC International Ltd. Congressional Oversight Commission, which she chairs, is to convene on Thursday to take up the issue.

'Casual way'

According to Santiago, the public official approached her at the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council meeting yesterday in Malacañang and, "in a casual way, tried to pressure me to accept ITR as the successful bidder."

She ignored the official as saying there was nothing anomalous that had transpired in the bidding process for the Masinloc plant, said to be the best-performing company of Napocor.

"I found it strange that someone should attempt to educate me, the chair of the power commission, on why a certain bidder should or is justly why the award was given to someone," she said.

Power play

Santiago said it could have been this kind of "power play" that got on Perez's nerves, provoking him to quit.

Asked who the public official was, she said the person was from the legislature.

Asked if it was a senator, she said her colleagues in the Senate "know me enough by now" to make such an attempt at convincing her.

By the suggestion that the official was a congressman, she said: "That's an irresistible conclusion."

Santiago said she did not "earn violence" toward the official simply because she was "to demand tax."

"I was not in the right uniform to do what I wanted to do," she said.

Massive

Santiago noted that Perez had developed a case with Marsh, and was not leaving "before the Masinloc sale is finalized."

Sen. Joker Arroyo aired a similar sentiment, saying Perez apparently wanted to complete the sale of the plant.

"Perez is a massive idealist," Arroyo told reporters.

Arroyo also said Perez should resign right away and not wait for two more months.

He said he was misinformed by Perez's reason to join Tanpuan[illegible] of Energy, and personally noted that under the latter's watch, oil and power prices did not go down.

The senator also said Perez managed to sell only five government corporations that produce only 8 megawatts of power.

Surprise

Senate President Franklin Drilon, on the other hand, expressed surprise at Perez's resignation.

Drilon expressed the hope that Perez's replacement would be a technocrat. "Political appointees should be avoided in so far as the energy sector is concerned," he told reporters.

Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas wished Perez well, and said the latter was saying for two more months probably because he wanted "to tie up loose ends" and wait for his replacement.

Poor man . . .

Front page A1

The first thing that came to his mind was to return the money. But Antonio Ortiz, a 60-year-old security guard, knew he could not keep it. He was sorely tempted as his wife[illegible] loved his ailing son.

The choice

He went home that day disturbed. It was a choice between the precious life of his son and returning the bag containing P25,000 in cash and P270,000 in checks to its rightful owner.

But the virtue of honesty instilled in him by his parents overcame their pleas. He chose to return the money.

He went to the Bill Barbo Bureau in this city to ask for help in locating the owner, identified as a certain Sarah Jhone of Barnhill town, South Columbia.

The woman was profuse with thanks upon seeing Cabarrio.

She said she had fly expected to get back what she had lost.

Through a friend, who was raised in to the public announcement Radyo Bomba, Sarah and Jane in face with the man of virtue and principle.

Upon hearing of the incident, Councilor Lourdes Cambarara, chair of the city council's committee on women and family affairs, met with Cabarrio.

Cambarara vowed to find help for Cabarrio's sick son.

Recognition

The city councilor said she would sponsor a resolution giving recognition to the true display of honesty by Cabarrio.

"This kind of man is worthy of praise and emulation," Cambarara said.

Poe to get presidential medal ...

From page A-1

Adviser on Culture Cecile Guidote-Alvarez yesterday said the presidential medals for Poe, as well as for Zeneida Amador and George Canseco, would be given in February when the agency marks National Arts Month.

Alvarez said she went to the 40th day commemoration of Poe's death and discussed the award with the late actor's family and friends, some of whom openly rejected it.

She did not disclose the results of her informal negotiations but stressed that there had been no formal communication to the family about granting the award. She said it was still up to Poe's family to accept or reject it.

No politics, please

"I think what's important is to insulate the award from politics," Alvarez said.

If politics were a consideration, Alvarez said, President Macapagal-Arroyo would have rejected any move to grant Poe an award or would have immediately given him one.

"Everyone agrees that FPJ had made great contributions to the film industry. Even the President has acknowledged him as an icon. Nobody is using politics in any kind of recognition for his achievements," she added.

Presidential discretion

NCCA Commissioner Trixie Angeles explained that the original purpose of the presidential medal of merit was to "wean presidential discretion" from the National Artist award.

According to Angeles, the medal would give the President full discretion in recognizing anyone—not just in the field of arts and culture—for his or her achievements. The President could also consult artists or field experts about the granting of the medal, which was what happened in Poe's case, she said.

It would be unfair to those who are deserving not to get an award simply because of politics. In FPJ's case, Angeles said, he could be cited for helping the "small people" of the industry, and not just for his achievements in Philippine cinema.

Alvarez said the Presidential Medal of Merit could also be given along with the Gawad ng Manlilikha ng Bayan or the National Living Treasure Awards.

Famas nominates FPJ

In a related development, NCCA chair and Tourism Undersecretary Evelyn Pantig said the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (Famas) had written the commission nominating Poe for a National Artist award.

Pantig said it would be the Movie Workers Welfare Foundation (Mowelfund) which would fill up the official nomination form.

The nomination period ends on Jan. 31. The National Artist award would be given next year after a tough screening by two panels of artists and experts.

The NCCA officials clarified that those who had been given the Presidential Medal of Merit could still be named National Artist.

Long overdue

Supporters of FPJ yesterday said they "welcomed the idea" of giving Poe recognition for his achievements as an actor, artist and leader of the film industry.

"I think it's long overdue," said Rex Cortez, chairman of the National Coordinating Council of Volunteers (NCCV) for FPJ.

The NCCA and Famas are both prestigious organizations which do not hand out recognition to undeserving people, he said.

He also noted that this time, the nomination had come from the movie industry itself and not from Malacañang, which earlier said it wanted to honor Poe with a National Artist award.

"This is different. It's a welcome development," Cortez said.

Susan unavailable

During the actor's wake from Dec. 14 to 21, Malacañang announced it would confer the National Artist award on Poe, a distinction that would have allowed him to be buried at the Libingan ng mga Bayani. His widow, Susan Roces, rejected the offer.

Yesterday, Roces could not be contacted for comment on the NCCA and Famas plans to bestow honors on her husband.

"She's out of town," her friend, Marichu Maceda, told the Inquirer.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Sts. Timothy and Titus

1st Reading: 2 Tim 1:1-8 or Tit 1:1-5

Gospel: Luke 10:1-9

The Lord appointed seventy-two other disciples and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place, where he himself was to go. And he said to them, "The harvest is rich, but the workers are few. So you must ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers to his harvest. Courage! I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Set off without purse or bag or sandals; and do not stop at the homes of those you know.

"Whatever house you enter, first bless them saying: 'Peace to this house.' If a friend of peace lives there, the peace shall rest upon that person. But if not, the blessing will return to you. Stay in that house eating and drinking at their table, for the worker deserves to be paid. Do not move from house to house.

"When they welcome you in any town, eat what they offer you. Heal the sick who are there and say to them: 'The kingdom of God has drawn near to you.'"

Commentary

In these first weeks of Ordinary Time we look to our ancestors in faith and how they put the gospel into practice after the resurrection of Jesus. These men (and women) are the second generation: disciples of disciples and were often sent out two by two to preach by their very presence and way of visiting and traveling that the kingdom of justice and peace was indeed already loose in the world. They were relying on hospitality, with only the bare essentials of what they might need—no purse or bags; with no weapons or defenses—no sandals, unable even to run from danger. And everywhere they went they brought Peace as a blessing. They stayed in welcomed and remembered that they came in the name of the Lord.

If you were traveling who would you take with you? What would you consider essential? How do you (or we) practice non-violence and go without weapons or long-term financial security? Is there anything in our lives that preaches the radical presence of the kingdom of justice and peace in the world without words?

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The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gozon

US says Iraq rebels planning big attack

BAGHDAD—Iraqi insurgents have reduced the level of violence in recent days, but may be planning a "more spectacular" attack just before or during Sunday's elections, a US general said on Monday.

Air Force Brig. Gen. Joe Lessel, deputy director of operations in Iraq, said in an interview from Baghdad with CNN that there had been a 54 percent drop in attacks by insurgents in recent days.

"We think it's a calm before the storm, that they're unable to sustain the level of attacks that they've had, but they're saving up for something more spectacular in the days preceding elections and on election day," Lessel said.

But Lessel said he did not believe most Iraqis would be deterred from voting by some audio tape by leading militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, declaring all-out war on the elections. "Most of the Iraqis want to vote... and I think Zarqawi overreaches to distance himself from the Iraqi people," he said.

In the tape aired on Tuesday, Zarqawi berated Iraq's Shiite majority for endorsing the poll and urged Sunnis to fight "infidel rulers."

Zarqawi, who has a $25 million bounty on his head, says the election is a plot by the United States and Shiite allies against Sunni Muslims, dominant during Saddam's rule.

The US ambassador to Iraq, John Negroponte, predicted Iraqis would be able to cast ballots in most of the country but acknowledged there would be "problematic areas."

US commanders have said fears of Iraqi Shiite rule, accounting for a quarter of the population, are no stumbling block to voting for a 275-seat national assembly in a single district.

The government plans to seal Iraq's borders, close airports, impose curfews and enforce traffic bans on election day in a bid to prevent suicide bombings and other attacks.

Iraq's electoral commission has said 14 million of Iraq's 27 million people could go to the polls on Sunday, creating what the CIA has described as the biggest security and organizational challenge since Saddam Hussein's fall.

Battle-hardened guerrillas have mounted frequent suicide car bomb assaults and ambushes on Iraqi security forces and Shiite Muslim targets in the run-up to the elections. Almost

Two top operatives of Zarqawi nabbed

BAGHDAD—Iraqi electoral blunders to lead new radical aide to top Mus-ab al-Zarqawi who was planning elections day attacks on al-Qaida's Iraq supreme continued his war on the vote with a deadly car bombing in Baghdad.

The government announced it had arrested Zarqawi lieutenant Ismel Mohammed Said al-Jubouri, also known as al-Ani (man of truth), blamed for a string of deadly militant attacks.

Kamil was responsible for 52 attacks, including the devastating 2003 bombing of the Baghdad UN headquarters that killed 23 people, including the world body's envoy to Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, the government said.

Zarqawi's propaganda mastermind, Hamed al-Dulaimi, who confessed Kamil had been planning attacks to use pelting mortars to disrupt Sunday's vote had also been arrested, the government added.

On custody Booth admitted to a string of attacks in August 2003, including the UN bombing, the assassination of Ayatollah Mohammed Bagr al-Hakim and the truck bombing of the Jordan Embassy, it said.

In an exclusive message posted on an Islamist website Sunday Zarqawi—the most wanted man in Iraq with a $25-million price on his head—declared all-out war on the elections but considers an Islamist and singled out the country's Shiite majority.

His network claimed responsibility for a suicide car bomb attack on Monday at a checkpoint near Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's party headquarters in Baghdad that left two dead and 30 wounded.

In the latest grisly Zarqawi video, an Egyptian driver who worked for a Kuwaiti firm was shown being shot dead in broad daylight on an Iraqi street. AFP

Iran rejects direct talks with US

TEHRAN—Iran ruled out direct talks with Washington on Monday as Israel urged the world to take action as against the Islamic republic's nuclear program, warning it could destabilize the Middle East.

US President George W. Bush, just last week, offered to hold talks with Iran on developments in Iraq, a move that comes at the possible military action, in an escalating row over the nuclear issue.

"We have said before that if anyone wants to talk to us in a threatening language, we will adopt the same stance," Iranian government spokesperson and Cabinet secretary Abolfath Rahmanzadeh told reporters.

Last week, Bush—who once branded Iran as an "axis of evil" with Saddam Hussein's Iraq and North Korea—said he could not rule out using force if Tehran failed to cease its uranium enrichment plans.

US Vice President Dick Cheney also warned that United might launch its own preemptive strike to end Iran's nuclear program, and he put Iran "right at the top of the list" of global trouble spots.

While Iran insists its nuclear activities are strictly for peaceful energy purposes, the European Union "big three"—Britain, France and Germany—are trying to secure long-term guarantees the clerical regime will not seek the bomb. AFP

Tsunami death toll reaches over 280,000

MADRID—The death toll from the Indian ocean tsunami continued to mounting rise Tuesday with more than 280,000 people now presumed dead as bodies continued to be recovered one month after the catastrophe.

Indonesia, whose Aceh province suffered destruction so severe that the full death toll will never be known, said it now had 209,429 listed as dead or as missing and presumed dead.

Eleven Indian Ocean nations were hit by the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunamis which ripped apart entire communities.

In Aceh, where reconstruction efforts to help hundreds of thousands of survivors is only just starting to ease with the departure of some foreign military, there are hopes that the tragedy would inspire peace with separatist rebels.

Finland had indicated that it was laying the groundwork for talks between the Indonesian government and guerrillas who have been fighting a decades-long war for independence.

Indonesia's security minister Widodo Adi Sucipto will lead a high-profile team to Finland this week for the peace talks, an official source said.

But the source said the talks had still to be fully confirmed and was unable to say when the officials would leave or how long they would be in Finland. AFP

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Breaking protocol, UN marks liberation of Auschwitz

UNITED NATIONS—The United Nations broke with years of protocol and commemorated the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps, directly linking its own founding with the end of the Holocaust in some of the strongest language ever.

The UN General Assembly marked the anniversary with a special session Monday, the first such session to its history dedicated to the Holocaust, and a watershed event for a body that has repeatedly been accused of an anti-Semitic agenda.

In statements to the body, Secretary General Kofi Annan reversed years of diplomatic silence and directly recognized, here as the chief victims of the Holocaust, not just one group among many that suffered at the hands of the Nazis.

"To survivors everywhere, whose last journeys, one president of Nations at Committee on Atrocities Foreign Policy "People have been optimistic about what's been happening in the Middle East and I think the secretary general has been doing everything he can to build trust so that the peace process can move forward."

Between 1 million and 1.5 million prisoners—most of them Jews—perished in gas chambers or died of starvation and disease at Auschwitz. Overall, 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

The United Nations was created in part because of world leaders' hope that it could help make sure the Holocaust was never repeated. That fact had largely been ignored for years, until Annan stated the fact audibly.

"The United Nations must never forget that it was created as a response to the evil of Nazism, or that the horror of the Holocaust helped reshape its mission," he said.

World leaders and Holocaust survivors like Wiesel, a Nobel laureate writer-witness, also wrestled with the question of how long humanity has owed the United Nations, whether its members must bear the still to stop future genocide. With mass atrocities in Sudan's Darfur region, the question took on new poignancy.

Wiesel, speaking of himself as the Jewish witness, said he knew it was too late for the victims of the Holocaust, but not for "today's children, ours and yours."

"It is for their sake more that we bear witness," he said. "It is for their sake that we are determined to denounce anti-Semitism, racism and religious or ethnic hatred."

In an institution where most values are laden with symbolism, there were plenty of telling signs: Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom was the first national official to speak before the General Assembly; the point of the strength of movements denying the Holocaust, asking if there was anything worse than the destruction of an entire race. AP

THIS picture released by Yad Vashem Photo Archives shows the arrival and processing of an entire transport of Jews from Carpatho-Ruthenia, a region annexed in 1939 to Hungary from Czechoslovakia, at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland, in May 1944.

Thailand, Vietnam brace for larger bird flu epidemic

BANGKOK—Bangkok warned that bird flu could kill up to two million Thais as it announced an emergency plan to combat the disease, while Vietnam also ordered hospitals to prepare for a larger epidemic after recording its ninth bird flu death this year at the weekend.

Thailand's deputy premier Chaturon Chaisaeng said Monday the government committee supervising attempts to control the deadly virus had devised a multimillion dollar, three-year strategy aimed at saving lives in the event of a massive outbreak.

"There will be a stock of 100,000 doses of flu medicine, 10 million masks and preparation to produce vaccines and the preparation of bird flu testing equipment," Chaturon told reporters.

The 770 million baht ($20 million) Thai scheme was needed because such an outbreak would likely kill some two million Thais, said Chaturon, without indicating how the government had arrived at the estimated death toll.

The virus has been found in a third Thai province, after two outbreaks were detected earlier this month, Thai authorities said Monday.

The latest outbreak of the H5N1 strain of the virus this month had been detected in locally bred chickens in the seaside province of Nakhon Pathom, Pakol Limsuwong, director-general of Livestock Development Department, told reporters.

Some 721 chickens in the district of Don Toom died of bird flu and 464 others were culled to prevent the disease from spreading, the department said in a statement.

Thailand has been under tight alert for bird flu since two outbreaks of the virus were declared in Ratong and Phitsanulok provinces.

Twelve people have died in Thailand from the virus that has swept Asia since December 2003.

"We are deeply concerned about human-to-human transmission, which would be very dangerous, and it is close" to happening, Chaturon told reporters, adding the latest deaths in Vietnam had added weight to the government's concerns.

Bird flu claimed two more victims in Vietnam Saturday with five other deaths announced last week, bringing to nine the number of people to die there since Dec. 26.

Vietnam's Prime Minister Phan Van Khai has asked hospitals in affected areas to prepare for a larger epidemic.

Around 30 people died in Vietnam after being infected since the end of 2003. Several suspected cases are under investigation.

Two patients—brothers of one of the victims—are currently hospitalized in Hanoi's Bach Mai hospital after testing positive.

"Both are in stable conditions," a health ministry official said Monday.

Their older brother died on Jan. 5. Alfred eats duck meat together with blood pudding. AFP

WORLD BRIEFS

Bush seeks $80-B military budget

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration will announce as early as Tuesday that it will seek about $80 billion in new funding for military operations this year in Iraq and Afghanistan, pushing the total for both countries to almost $300 billion so far, Administration and congressional officials said on Monday that the new request would come on top of the $25 billion in emergency spending already approved for this fiscal year. That means funding for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will total nearly $160 billion in fiscal 2005 alone — a record amount that also tops dollar estimates of the cost. In addition to money for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and for new military equipment, some $600 million is expected to be set aside for humanitarian, reconstruction and military operations in Asian nations devastated by last month's tsunami, congressional aides said. The administration is considering added relief for Indonesia, the hardest-hit country, they said. Reuters

More quakes spark panic in Asia

BANDA ACEH — Fresh earthquakes in Asia on Monday rattled traumatized survivors of last month's killer tsunami, while Indonesia and rebels in Aceh agreed to hold talks, seeking to cut to the calamity's toll, a chance for peace. Almost a month after the tsunami killed as many as 200,000 people across the Indian Ocean, a strong earthquake hit Indonesia's eastern Sulawesi Island, killing one person, sending a tremor rattling the provincial capital Manado and sending frightened tsunami survivors running into the streets. Another quake, measuring 6.1, was recorded west of Great Nicobar Island in India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which were badly hit by the Dec. 26 tsunami, but there were no reports of casualties or damage. Police calmed residents who, with TV images of the tsunami fresh in their minds, thought giant waves were on the way. Some patients had a they had started pumping intravenous drips. Reuters

Iraqi judge assassinated in Baghdad

BAGHDAD — Gunmen assassinated an Iraqi judge as he was leaving his home in central Baghdad on Tuesday, police sources said. The judge, identified as Sabri Nabbas Shawqat, was killed along with his son in a roadside ambush, the sources said. It was the latest killing in a campaign of intimidation by insurgents seeking to disrupt elections set for 30th. The mayor gunned down overshadowed Baghdad's progress in governing and the capital's deputy police chief in recent weeks. Reuters

Five dead as Thai boat sinks

BANGKOK — A boat loaded with up to 48 foreign tourists heading to the Thai resort island of Koh Samui overturned on Tuesday, killing at least five people, police and rescue workers said. About 30 people were missing. The boat was traveling from Pa Ngan island, where a big party is held every full-moon night, to Samui when the accident happened, police said. The speed boat was taking tourists back from the overnight full-moon party on Pa Ngan island back to Samui and sank at dawn. "One Bumbli Tungkasawasee said from a rescue helicopter. Rescue workers found the bodies of three foreign men and one foreign woman floating in the Gulf of Thailand, police said. The origin of a fifth person found dead could not be determined, police said. The full-moon party is popular among young, bare-pack tourists. Reuters

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OPINION

Send your feedback to inquirer.opinion@inquirer.com.ph or editor@inquirer.com.ph

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Islam and peace

ONE of the five pillars of Islam is the hajj, or the pilgrimage every good Muslim is encouraged to take to Mecca at least once in a lifetime. On the last day of this year's hajj, Sheik Abdel-Aziz al-Sheik, speaking at a mosque near Mount Arafat on the climactic day, denounced the violence waged by Muslim militants against Saudi Arabia.

"The greatest affliction to strike the nation of Islam came from some of its own sons, who were lured by the devil," al-Sheik, who is the Grand Mufti, or senior Sunni imam (mullet-scholar) in Saudi Arabia, said. "They have called the nation infidel, they have shed protected blood and they have spread vice on earth, with explosions and destruction and killing of innocents."

EDITORIAL

He asked young Muslims, in particular, to ponder the consequences of their actions: "How would you meet God? With innocent blood you shed or helped shed?"

The importance of al-Sheik's most recent statement is best understood in terms of the role individuals such as he play in Islam. There are three major interpretations of Islam as a consequence of the schisms that took place during the 7th century: Sunni, Shia and Khariji. Of these, the most prominent are Shia and Sunni. The Sunni (which means "The Way") interpretation of Islam has the largest number of adherents in the Muslim world: about 90 percent of Muslims are Sunni. Sunni Islam is hierarchical, devoted to Islamic law (Shari'ah law), as interpreted by Muslim scholars and teachers. Of these scholars and teachers, the most senior and influential is the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (although there are muftis in other Islamic countries), who not only makes sermons but also issues statements that define and explain the proper interpretation and relevance of Islamic law to current events. Indeed, among his titles is "President of the Committee of Major Scholars and the Center for Knowledge Based Research and Verdicts."

When the World Trade Center was destroyed in 2001, the Grand Mufti swiftly issued a statement declaring the violent attack to be an abomination to Islam. Said he: "These matters that have taken place in the United States and whatever else is of their nature of place hijackings and taking people hostage or killing innocent people, without a just cause, this is nothing but a manifestation of injustice, oppression and tyranny which the Islamic Shari'ah does not sanction or accept; rather it is expressly forbidden and it is amongst the greatest of sins."

The Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, then, reiterated to the two million Muslims listening to his sermon that terrorism and terrorist means are incompatible with Islam. He clearly placed the interpretation of Islam that permits terrorism for political ends firmly beyond the pale for 90 percent of practicing Muslims. This is an important teaching that non-Muslims must be aware of.

As the Grand Mufti himself said in 2001, "It is upon the media outlets and whoever is behind them, from amongst those who make accusations against the Muslims and who strive to incite this noble and upright religion, and describe it with that which it is free from, all in order to kindle tribulation and to harm the reputation of Islam and the Muslims and to separate the hearts and consider the chaos—it is obligatory upon them to refrain from this iniquitousness and to realize that every sane and just person knows all the details of Islam, and knows that it is not possible for him to describe it with these descriptions, and that he cannot make these types of accusations against it. This is because, on account of the passing of history, the nations have not known the followers of this religion and its adherents except to be those who fulfill their rights (due to others) and their absence of injustice and oppression."

It is reassuring at this time that Islamic leaders are channeling the faith of their co-religionists to peaceful ends. But it is equally important for non-Muslims to understand the teachings of Islam, and the interpretation of the same according to its leaders.

Once again the world has been reminded that the Islamic religion is peaceful and non-violent; and that the millions who went to Mecca in recent weeks did so in accordance with the teachings of a faith that does not profess, or condone, sectarian violence and hatred.

Warning to traffic violators: You are being 'shot'

AS I SEE IT

Ninez M. Cruz

HERE'S a warning to jaywalkers and undisciplined drivers: You think you are getting away with your illegal acts when, during midday breaking traffic scales of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority don't seem to be violating traffic rules? Wrong. In a few days or weeks, you will receive a letter from the MMDA telling you that you have just been "shot" (meaning photographed) violating a traffic rule and you have to pay the fine or the consequences.

Yes, the traffic aides directing traffic are as though "they are blind, oblivious to the traffic violations right and left, but you are not really getting off totally. Other traffic aides are manning discreetly taking pictures of you and your vehicles, undeniable proof of your violations, and you have to pay the fine, or else....

What if the drivers or jaywalkers disregards the "shot" and refuses to pay the fine? Again, you will think you are getting away with it. Nothing will happen for weeks and months. You may even commit more violations with no apparent repercussions. But wait until you try to renew your driver's license or the Land Transportation Office has come up with updates in the computers as a delinquent driver and your license will not be renewed. You may even go to jail.

The penalties for traffic violations, including jaywalking, are much stiffer now. In the case of fetus, a fine for the second offense, and a jail term for the third.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando explained at the inception on Monday that the "no-dangerous-zone" traffic scales in the metropolis, including its off the cuffs is "misunderstanding") with a few minutes over the "no-dig scheme."

"There are only three or four minutes [supposing the "no-dig"]," said Bernando. "For those are 17 Metro Manila mayors. And those three probably thought that the "no-dig" scheme will mean problems into water like they do in San Juan during the floats of St. John.

And there they will learn their lesson," the MMDA chief explained.

What don't you make a show of arresting the violators so that others will obey the rules? When people know that erring drivers and jaywalkers are being arrested, they suddenly become law-abiding.

"The only trouble with that is that they get into the habit of obeying the law only when they see law enforcers. But they should get into the habit of obeying the law at all times, even when there is no policeman around," Fernando said. "What they learn that they are being photographed by somebody they cannot see and that the summons to pay the fine will come soon enough, they will also learn that 'big brother is watching' them and they will be careful."

"Besides," Fernando continued, "what there is a contact between the violator and the traffic aide, don't relieve the antipathies for bribery comes in. The 'no-contact' was someone than interpreted."

Policemen are forced to walk in the streets because the sidewalks are full of parked vehicles. If not sidewalk vendors, Fernando says cold.

The vendors were allowed to go back to the sidewalks by some mayors during the Christmas season but the policy should not be restored now that the holidays are over, he said. As for the parked vehicles, more really is a shortage of parking spaces in Metro Manila. It is the responsibility of local government units to provide more parking spaces either by converting parking spaces to multiple dwellings, or by giving private business operators such as tax holidays or loans or some-tax cheats. They also should not give commercial establishments business permits unless they can show that they have ample parking spaces and will not use the sidewalks for parking. Parking buildings cost a lot of money with a minimum of effort and investment.

No satisfaction

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

SEK Hernandez of Greenpeace Philippines, winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2003, gave the best advice last week during the Kalinggalan forum in the CCP. Don't bother Americans, he counseled them. "The American way of life, whose mainstay of over-consumption is commended to these parts as the American dream, has been severely characterized by the environmental movement as unsustainable. As American consumption [1] uses over-half of the energy gotten from the developing world. If we are to sustain such a wasteful lifestyle, the earth might not be able to sustain our needs for the next 10 years. If everyone were to live like an American, we would need to consume at least six planets' worth of resources. Perhaps this is why bees and the US government were overjoyed with the prospect of life on Mars."

I wasn't there, so I don't know exactly how the audience reacted. I'm just taking it from the reports [2] and knowledge I've certainly drew chuckles. Still, his last remark is doubtless meant to raise shudders. But to me of it is perfectly serious, and absolutely sound.

The Earth, which contains a fourth of the earth's resources, the United States alone all. Much of the US consumption goes to waste. $600 billion yearly. The entire world has been spending only $13 billion for health and nutrition. There and then, you see not just the problem with over-consumption but with the kind of priorities over-consumption takes. The reported rate for arms is directly related to the average American citizen consuming 32 times more than his counterpart in the developing world. It's the only way to keep that "way of life," as George W. Bush puts it, flourishing increased.

What Indian Hernandez's advice was sensible is that we have been emulating the American predilection for inordinate consumption, and quite typically have even gone one American step further. I remember some years ago living with a group of Filipinos in the United States who were comparing possessions with [3] particular concern at cubicles. One of the things they talked about was dustless. To some of mention, they were digital user ones, and debated furiously where the best burglaries were to be had. I said I noticed Americans did not particularly care to wear pants to jeans, or indeed drive banged up cars. Consumption is to me blessed. Kinlogan's Bible holds to us up, if it is unappropriate. This one's offered not to. You're entered, you have to look your level." I didn't realize being frugal and not wearing bursting clothes on Monday mornings could be popularity.

The same is true right here at home. Malls aren't just a place where you can find what you need, or where you can go in in summer to escape the heat (they've got air conditioners going full blast.) they are a common social [4] activity in provincial towns. The opening of an SM [5] mission town, their convention, it represents the encouragement of civilization. The same break for signatures come tens, of tweens. The brand names are to be found in shop after shop, and enjoy no small amount of panic-image. I can almost hear the paraphrase: "Shalwar kameezes, di ka pa papatong. Dito'y already pasé, and you don't happen your look!" Never mind our being able to sign your name, just wear signatures.

It's probably the worst legacy American subordinate has bequeathed to us. Enough for you to ask America today we didn't fail, like in, on the British and get to exchange for being nourished to the richest in appreciation for citizens it serves, the cultural concerns and limits. The concept of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness has only in owning guns and having things, including votes.

What our efforts to emulate American consumerism do to the very brain is scary indeed. We define success as possession or accumulation and elevate any hedonistic appetites, which are the foundations of of consumption. The late Judge Ishmir Ocampo was right: life can never obliterate corruption if we outnumber people to get to manage and courage in our own things and happiness not beaten more and more. We have come to a wealth of wealth to us, just but stupidly make who have only a cache of lust to dangle. Barry Gutierrez is right as well: Why should anyone imagine he should feel deprived by going back to UP as an auditorium professor rather than seeking a lucrative job as the Unilever Group's marketing whiz-kid, when he is in fact choosing the life of the mind to the life of the mindless?

As the very sense, that pursuit of happiness is really the pursuit of God's gold, also called money. Money is the [6] thing that can guarantee more luxury cars, more TV sets and more signature jeans? You'd think that if we had to make such great sacrifices to get more money, we'd get more food, more books, more museums, more beautiful cities and shoes, more roads and bridges.

Every time I hear governments call for belt-tightening, I laugh because we have such a strange concept of belt-tightening. If belt-tightening means giving up our desperate craving for more and more consumer products, then that's something we should be doing not just during hard times but during normal ones. At the very least because we are then at risk economic pressures to be great as a British lamentable told ages ago, we are a poor country believing we are rich. At the very least because even if we were rich, we would find happiness as the end of that pursuit. The only thing that brings fulfillment when pursued voluntarily is the quest for knowledge, and the only thing that brings unquenchable is life. All the other pursuits brings is, well, bitch suggests says it best: "I can't get no satisfaction."

Espinosa's opéra comique at Edsa

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

IN THE MIDST of the fourth anniversary of Edsa 2, the financial publication Asia, 20, the mysterious case of retired Gen. Edgardo Espinosa, based on an interview with him on March 6, 2001, the person who is now in the diplomatic service, was the ring leader of one of a number of groups which were plotting the overthrow of the then beleaguered Presidency Joseph Estrada.

Although the plot, in which Espinosa was the conspirator, failed to take off and although his recollections did not reveal much fresh information on the aborted coup making it to the Philippines, the publication of his account is a valuable contribution to the expanding literature on coups. In particular, it fills gaps in the reconstruction of coup planning that has defined the turbulent politics of political change during the past three decades. The recollection and publication of the narrative of why some coups succeeded and why others failed. The plot with which Espinosa is associated was one such failed coup attempt.

Espinosa's account of the coup plot has come to light. The first time it was disclosed was in my book, "The Fall of Joseph Estrada: The Inside Story." The version on the Espinosa episode was based on interviews with his fellows in the plot. Espinosa's role in the plot was so secret that it was kept in the treasonous archives. That reconstruction of coup history can be switched further by fresh evidences (such as that of Espinosa) of key players in the many conspiracies that lurked in the shadows of power struggles during that stormy period of Philippine politics.

Our material material, plus Espinosa's recollections, as well as those of other generals who are now beginning to tell their side of the military developments in the Estrada years, fill in the gaps which were just now among the myriad of conspiracies that sprung up during the tempestuous years of Estrada in the future beginning in November 2000. From this time the House of Representatives stood to refer the articles of impeachment to the Senate on Nov. 13, 2000, thereby clearing the way for the trial of the president. He did not plan a coup. He would have fought anyone who hatched one up, I guess."

Although the plot was separated from the plot of Reyes, Estrada converged only on one point, that involved Mr. Arroyo as the linchpin of their efforts to give a legitimate Supreme Court power-mind of the plot, didn't attempt to frustrate it. Espinosa's group was more into above Reyes' intentions. It was in the dark about Reyes' activities in line up the support of the chain of command behind a possible civilian. Espinosa thought Reyes was "politically-supported Estrada."

The Espinosa group planned to preempt the contest by any other group of the opportunity to announce a defection to Edsa, including possibly Reyes'.

The group cut across the fact if its planned march to Edsa had succeeded in getting people power coalitions to bring down Estrada, Reyes would have lost his job and Estrada would have been toppled, following the fate of Ferdinand Marcos and Mohamad Suharto of Indonesia.

Espinosa went further to anticipate the triumvirate of an apostolic one even that would have triggered an instant confrontation between Reyes' forces and Espinosa's "breakaway" group.

Even Espinosa's plot was not the only one that his group's plot was finally framed by top-level manipulation that took it be groomed into a dramatic march of his troops and announcement of defection would coincide in principle of people power in the streets of Edsa and Ortigas.

One of the final characteristics of Espinosa's plot was that it didn't foresee Reyes and his group jumping the gun on him and announcing their defection. Moreover, Espinosa's plot had more than a touch of grandiose theatrics. It was inspired by the historic fascination with the "trial by horseback," transforming the plot into what the French call opéra comique.

(Why Espinosa failed to give the signal for his unit has to be much in play will be explained in the second and concluding section on this.)

A land of hope and progress

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SINGLE meeting for our flight to Honolulu last week, our motley group together with representatives of Boardwalk Channel Destination Inc. and other Lopez companies, were joined at the Cendan airport by Lucy Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr., Kawayan Cruz Melgar, Rene Dominguez and Rep. Danilo Antonino Dantodio.

The three officials are thought to be among the country's youngest elective officials. Dantodio is the youngest congressman at 29, Cruz Melgar, 30, is the youngest governor and youngest member of Congress, while Dominguez, the son of former Aquino Cabinet member and presidential adviser on Muslim affairs Abul Dominguez, is the youngest provincial governor elected in his 40s through his landowning years youngest.

Maybe that's the reason the three were in other but got to be one of the most dynamic and promising young people in the country. Governor Cruz-Sun is the chief of the entire Sorsogon City South Cotabato, Kidapawan and Isla, Santos City) region, or "development district" in the language of bureaucrats. A district in which Mindanao's long and bloody conflict between Muslim rebels and government troops was raging

MMDA crew acting like fascists

BY THE MORNING of Jan. 14, we were witness to a confrontation in front of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) compound on Edsa. Metropolitan Manila Development Authority personnel were chasing out-of-work streets, hounding hapless mere hawkers on to such a few pesos for their families.

Time to set ministry as a ministry for the oppressed, we let the workers know and empowered, shouting down from the walls of the NCCP. But acting like arrogant zombies, the MMDA guys tried to force themselves into private property, banging on our gate. And when one of the NCCP staff attempted to reason with them, they became even more furious, indignant, in fact, flashing the dirty finger right in their face. Obviously, they were not used to dissent, and for as long as we, livelihood is available, workers will continue to self their wares on the sidewalks. And the poor will continue to take to the streets.

God acted in public officials who are decent, respectful and have the good sense to hear it.

—NOLASCO ADEH,
JOY RUTH ALVARENGA,
general secretary,
National Council of Churches
in the Philippines,
877 Edsa, West Triangle, QC

God's help

IF now with endless chat I read the latest "Age-old question, an answer," (PDI, 1/19/05) especially because the Philippines is the only major Catholic/Christian country in Asia.

Well we never stop blaming God for the disasters which befall us? Why doesn't God use persons then? But we never see the good that God produces as a result of the disaster. Look at the outpouring of aid and support from all over the world. Man, we are so evil in and each ourselves. Does anything ever change, wouldn't God use disaster to remind us of what could be?

With the whole world hosting a helping hand, is this not an indication that God is marching and saying as well as something? Or would we rather mark what the world is doing to our politicians, and groups and NGOs, him see to God?

—RAMON SEVILLANO,
jsep@heart.yahoo.com

Another show of arrogance

THE EXCLUSION of deposed President Joseph Estrada in Hong Kong, complete with accessories denied just for his pen and ink, at the behest of the Gloria administration, has turned out to be another episode of arrogance and defiance. This across the anti-graft court right, to justice must be investigated for favoring the accused in the worst atrocities of the people of the Philippines.

Estrada is playing with the justice system, and the Sandiganbayan justices are playing along with him under the long shadow of Malacañang's present occupant. Like convicted rapist, former Rep. Brolin Jalosjos during everything to get a presidential pardon even humiliation grounds. Erap has been able to close his trial, the public with his antics while successfully mocking the administration of justice.

This is worse than the scenario that hit 12 seniors. This is the legal and moral. Here of our racism and our inconsistency, which purportedly meant us of a "strong republic," eventually being selected by those whose interest are suspect in ensuing proportions.

And we still be surprised if, after his acquittal, Erap will run the republic and eventually compel it to pay damages for prosecuting him and his BFF.

Only in the Philippines.

—BERNARDO GERONIMO,
1027 Craig St.,
Sampaloc, Manila

Judge denies taking leave of absence

THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER (PDI) has reported for work on Dec. 13 to Dec. 17, 2004. My fellow judges, the employees of the courts in Benguet province, can attest to this. I understand at least four marriages on Dec. 15 (this can be verified from the civil registrar's office). I presided over the raffle of cases conducted in the afternoon of that same day, and I attended a Christmas program (party) at the Justice Hall, La Trinidad, Benguet on Dec. 17.

Due to [illegible] brought about by the change of temperature in Benguet, I could not report for work on Dec. 20 to 23 and for this I filed a leave of absence on Dec. 20.

If I may enlighten Citizen, a third party claim is not addressed to the judge; it is addressed to the sheriff. On this, he should read Section 16, Rule 39 of the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure, as amended.

I was not and I am not aggrieved by the news article. Citizen should have known that he is writing for a newspaper that is circulated nationwide, and I have to be informed as the judge who caused chaos simply because I was on leave. By the way, all judges and anybody for that matter, are entitled on go on a leave of absence.

May I remind Citizen that there is such a thing as responsible journalism. He should not put anybody in a bad light or ears a living.

—BENJAMIN GALAURAN,
presiding judge,
Regional Trial Court Branch 61,
La Trinidad, Benguet

A REPRESENTATIVE of Judge Benjamin Galauran called me for a meeting with the judge but I was then busy with the presidential visit. I told him to call me again on a later date when the judge was free so I could get his side but his representative never called back.

—FRANK CHAVE,
correspondent,
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Promoting international harmony

I WISH to thank the Inquirer for featuring DNR, U.N.O.C. the picture of "Masjid Al Hasan" in the *City of Mecca*, Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

It is indeed heartwarming and touches our senses to see it featured on the front page of a Philippine daily. I wonder that by featuring the sacred mosque in Mecca, the success helped in promoting local and international understanding, peace and harmony.

—OSCULAR S. ORMAQUINDO,
Abubakar Dans University,
Manila Information Office,
11/F Samanta Bldg.,
Kalaw Street, Ermita, Manila

Inq Buzz

Questions of the Week

Do you approve of MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando's "wet rag scheme" to minimize jaywalking in the Metro streets? Why or why not?

Senders of e-text (E-Text) published on Tuesday's **Inq Buzz** *will each receive an "Inquirer Mug!"*

INQUIRER Northern Luzon
E-mail: ar_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Tarlac village romances with Japanese cranes

By Russell Arruiz
Tarlac City

BALIBIGAHANAN, one of Tarlac City's 76 barangays, is said to have derived its name from the Ilocano word *sanahang*, meaning "field."

Small wonder why 'field' now, many parts of the small village's 1,027 hectares of mostly agricultural land continue to play host to regularly visiting migratory birds known locally as egret (cranes).

The birds have learned to love stopping by Balibigahanan's (pop: 7,000) for food and rest but never for breeding, according to barangay chair Nesty Dayao. They reportedly descend on the farms and swamps before the start of the planting season from May to August.

Three of the birds' favorite places are called "Cherok," "Bunot" and "Lambing." Loafing is called so such because it used to be a landing strip for Japanese warplanes during World War II.

Dayao believes the birds are Japanese cranes migrating from their breeding grounds in Japan during the rainy season there. "But they keep returning to their place of origin and refuse to settle anywhere else," he says.

One reason Balibigahanan is a favorite habitation of the visiting cranes is that they are neither captured nor killed in the village.

It is a right to behold: feathered creatures in groups, dressing and feeding, with white bodies and long necks and legs.

"This makes it difficult for village folk to even think of harming them," says Dayao. People are so used to the presence of the birds that protecting them has become a responsibility, he says.

The village's age-old but unsolved mystery with the traveling cranes will hopefully become a well-known part of the history and culture of the city, what with efforts by barangay officials to make the birds' annual stop a tourist attraction.

As an initial effort, a marker was put up at the village entrance to call attention to the place as a haven for journeying flocks of regular visitors.

100 years of Episcopal service

By Desiree Cabeza
Sagada, Mt. Province

THE ARRIVAL of a faith that knows no boundary is something that people of Sagada, Mt. Province, cherish.

Last December, they celebrated the centennial of the Anglican Episcopal Church mission by remembering how it had reached their lives. Centennial members posted their efforts to shape the three-serving, "The Sagada Mission Story," somewhere in the changes that the pine-covered mountain resort endured until the help and direction of the Anglican Episcopal mission.

The play depicted the story of Sagada natives who embraced the faith "that did not oppress the people." It was written and directed by Jorge Fernandez, based on the historical writings of historian and missionary William Henry Scott and Sagada native Benjamin Langid, and the libretto of Rev. Daniel Cariño.

"The inspiration provided by the ancestral leaders of Sagada and the pioneer missionaries are an agenda of the mysterious ways God works in human history was the play's theme," Fernandez said.

He said the production was a labor of love for the community. The all-Sagadan cast and crew were composed of teachers, professionals, students, church leaders, farmers and even tour guides.

Sagada was built through the help of American Anglican Episcopal missionaries led by Rev. John Staunton Jr., an engineer.

Historical drama

Scott's spirit acted as narrator of the historical drama, starting with the story of a headhunting expedition in Dagdag, one of the old villages of Sagada, by warriors from seven neighboring villages one morning in July 1898.

Kristine Bandoden of the Igorot Sagadan dances in honor organized the expedition on the suspicion that Sagada was harboring members of the secret society Katipunan. Eighty-four Dagdag residents—men, women, children and the elderly...were beheaded that morning.

As the story goes, in the Igorot belief, Staunton, a staunch supporter of the Anglo-Catholic movement, was one of the first priests who volunteered to serve as a missionary in the Philippines, across three time zones.

He, his wife Maria, and the five and Mrs. Walter Clapp were the first four missionaries of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines. Rev. Charles Henry Brent was the first bishop of the missionary district in the country.

Staunton was assigned as superintendent of schools in Cebu before he was moved to Baguio City.

A few months after, he was assigned to a new mission station in Sagada.

Land grant

Three leaders of Sagada (l. Ordiquen—Lakay Tomas Longid, Lakay Balicdan Inwang and Lakay Colpit Capuyan—gave Staunton a vast tract of land.

The site, called Pulbenak, was a forested hilltop area covered partly as dumping ground for the community's cesspool or death chute. The area was between the villages of Sagada and their tribal enemies to the east.

The American mission was established to become the buffer zone to protect the ili of Sagada's head-hunting attacks. It was 1904, six years after the 1898 Dagdag massacre, that land-hungry Sagadans still fearful of similar strikes.

The Staunton displayed the American pioneering spirit in other ways. A graduate of Yale University and the Columbia School of Mines, Staunton built an industrial complex in the area that included an electrical and telephone network, mills, a water system (still in operation today) and stables.

In 1915, Sagada was hailed as one of the outstanding achievements of American missionaries in the Philippines.

The Staunton stayed in Sagada for 20 years. During the period, Staunton would occasionally conduct fund-raising campaigns in the US for the community and the mission.

World War I in 1917 struck a blow to the Sagada mission, increasing prices of imported fuel and other supplies shut down some industrial operations and diverted projects. However, the construction of the Saint Mary the Virgin Church, the mission's enduring symbol in the town, continued.

The town was ravaged after Japanese forces stopped Japanese forces there during World War II. But through the community's effort, it rose from the ashes of countless conflicts.

"You wouldn't believe how many Australian people have been through. But they have kept their housing and their homes," Scott's character in the play said.

THE ANGLICAN-EPISCOPAL mission in Sagada, built around the village, has become a central part of the local community.

SAGADANS at local service at the Saint Mary the Virgin Church in this photo taken in the early 1920s.

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The success of this event would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of the Office of the Secretary General, Office for Student Affairs, the Central Student Council, and the Student Organizations Coordinating Council, together with the television networks which responded to the University's intention to attend this event.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2005

Across the NATION

GMA asked to probe Lapids for plunder

By Tonyton Crojan
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Pampanga Mayor Gov. Jennifer Cuneo has asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to order an investigation of Pampanga's quarry industry, saying corruption allegedly committed by Sen. Manuel Lapid and his son, Gov. Mark Lapid, involving quarry revenues has resulted "plunder proportions."

Cuneo asked the President to mobilize the Office of the Ombudsman, the Commission on Audit and the National Bureau of Investigation for the investigation.

The vice governor stated the appeal in her, in Monday's regular session of the provincial board, showed how receipts and revenues schemes that prevented the accounting of revenue from quarry taxes.

"The upper portion of the receipt is either hand-off to the social member is then punched with holes. Without the [serial numbers], how can those in the south [office] validate the receipts with the duplicate copies or check if receipts that problem is in the field were falsified?" Cuneo said in a privilege speech.

The collection system has been designed in such a way that it leaves no room for government to know how much it is actually earning from sand," he said.

"There is falsification of public documents here," he said, referring to Form 51, considered accountable receipts under the government's accounting and auditing rules.

The hearings made four calls to Senator Lapid on Tuesday but failed to get his reaction to Cuneo's claims. In calls made between 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m., Lapid's aides said the senator was variously in meetings in Mabalacat and with his lawyers and advisers.

Governor Vilmor Mangaoang, Lapid's legal officer, called Cuneo's allegations "entirely false."

Governor Lapid reportedly cut short his trip to the United States and returned to the country on Monday night. The hearings failed to reach him through his mobile phone on Tuesday.

Cuneo also said personnel assigned to labor checkpoints to monitor the receipts, find shortcomings, were not provincial employees.

Showing certified documents obtained from the government-owned Natural Resources Development Corp. (NRDC) and the office of the provincial treasurer, he pointed to the "glaring discrepancies" in income.

Documents under the NRDC granted P5,451.3 million in 1999, P3,315 million in 2000 and P3,614 million in 2001. The treasurer's office reported P24.3 million in 2001, P19.3 million in 2003 and P18.3 million in 2004.

These agencies collected the same P300 tax for every truckload of sand hauled out of Pampanga.

"The corruption is in the magnitude of plunder. The amounts lost to the provincial government under the Lapids are staggering," Cuneo said.

He said an average of 3,000 trucks haul sand from the province daily, and not only about 150 trucks a month as the rubber-time reports indicate.

Senator Lapid chaired the provincial quarry task force during his three terms as governor (He was re-elected in July 2004).

Near months before the May 10, 2004 elections, quarry income dropped to P195,000 in January, P300,000 in February and almost P900,000 each in March and April.

Under the law, a public official is liable for *plunder if the amounts of public funds* reportedly involved P50 million and above.

The delay or non-remittance of revenue shares, Cuneo said, had prompted anti-riot teams and villages in Pampanga to devise their own collection schemes.

COMMUNION
A participant in the Dinagyang Festival, Iloilo City's famous annual feast, receives communion at the San Jose parish Church, not forgetting what the festival was all about—to honor the Child Jesus.

Ex-general says top execs behind smuggling

ILOILO, Iloilo—The chief of the anti-smuggling task force here on Tuesday blamed top government officials for smuggling fuels that foreigners.

In a press briefing, retired Lt. Gen. Jose Calimlim said these chief, said some "influential" people in the government and officials of the Bureau of Customs (BoC) are protecting big-time smuggling syndicates here.

"These smugglers have many allies. I have not been going against smugglers and I have been telling them [smugglers who are helping them with their illegal activities]," Calimlim said, without identifying them.

He said some BoC officials have been in connivance with smuggling syndicates and have made it easier for smugglers to operate here.

He said some of these high-ranking government officials have been approaching him and trying to bribe him to give in to the demands of their "sound friends" who have been suspected as smugglers.

"They do it by text and phone calls. They usually explain that they were just helping their friends," he said. "I have received their names because I do not want to appear them."

He said charges have been filed against one of the suspected smugglers.

He said the task force has set up to name a list of suspected smugglers "because there have been no concrete evidence to link them to these illegal activities."

Manuela Zamoranos, Iloilo customs collector, said 71 smuggling attempts have been foiled since Dec. 1.

Calimlim also shrugged reports about the inquiry called by the House of Representatives about his alleged involvement in smuggling P2 million worth of Tambores metal into Davao Del.

Allen Macabenos, *PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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House-to-house search for guns set in Cavite

CAMP VICENTE LEE, Laguna—In the wake of two massacres in Cavite that claimed the lives of eight persons this month, the regional police director of Calabarzon (same) has ordered a house-to-house search for firearms in the region.

He also ordered the putting up of police checkpoints along strategic areas and home searches.

Chief Supt. Oscar Calderon said he had already instructed Senior Supt. Roberto Ramirez, Cavite police director, to apply for search warrants so they could start a house-to-house search for unlicensed guns.

He said the gun slayings in Amadeo and Indang towns last week could have been prevented if only from firearms in Cavite were effectively controlled.

On Jan. 1, 10 men, including barangay captain Danilo Pedrosa, barged into the house of the Villanueva family in Barangay Halang, Amadeo and opened fire, killing four.

Police found 45 bullet casings from high caliber firearms at the crime scene. Seven of the suspects are still at large.

Last week, a drunken Federico Bapolo gunned down his neighbor Dionesio Diaz, Diaz's wife Cristeta and son Marvin after the family let their cows stray into their neighbor's lot.

Bapolo turned himself in after police put up a P300,000 bounty on his head and issued a shoot-to-kill order vs gunmen.

The province also recorded the most victims of stray bullets in the whole Calabarzon region during the New Year revelry.

Calderon said they could not afford to take any chances. He, however, clarified that the order was just a reminder to the different police units at the police are supposedly committed to their pursuit of gun smugglers and gun-runners.

He said police are now working closely with barangay officials and other sectors to ensure their operation's success. Marlon Ramos, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Bohol town has 2 mayors as poll body disqualifies winner

By Chito Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

PEPITO

BALILIHAN, Bohol—This municipality has now two chief executives after Mayor Georgia Dangog-Pepito refused to step down in favor of rival Simeon Tinio who was proclaimed mayor by a special municipal board of canvassers Monday.

"I am still running unless from the Department of Interior and Local Government and the Supreme Court," Pepito said.

Pepito was proclaimed after the Commission on Elections (Comelec) en banc affirmed a resolution disqualifying Pepito for lack of residency.

But in a statement, Pepito said the board "has been very biased in favor of my opponent."

"They disqualified me without giving me due process," his statement said.

The proclamation of Tinio was held in the Comelec provincial office in Tagbilaran, about 51 km northwest of Balilihan, due to security concerns.

Pepito said she was willing to step down if ordered by the Department of Interior and Local Government and the High Tribunal.

Pepito was a nurse born and raised in Sorsogon who migrated to 1971 in the United States. She returned in 1997.

Her statement said more than a year before the election, she applied for repatriation as a natural-born Filipino citizen.

"I never regretted that decision," she said. "I came home to Bohol to serve and that is what I am doing now."

She got back her citizenship in October 2003 but has lived in Bohol for six years since her return.

Tinio's lawyer, Alberto Bautista, said his client has already assumed office "so there is nothing to implement."

When asked on Pepito's refusal to relinquish her post, Bautista said she could execute it to occupy the mayor's seat.

"We will just follow normal from her," Bautista said in jest.

Almost 2/3 of Pepito's supporters were seen near the municipal hall but there was no sign of tension.

Insp. Samuel Udtohan, Balilihan police chief, said he placed his entire police force on alert.

Gov says cops ineffective vs drugs

By Romy G. Arnaudo
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—Negros Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz has expressed dissatisfaction over the performance of the police in the campaign against illegal drugs in the province.

The governor told the town and city police chiefs during a recent Peace and Order Council meeting that they were not doing anything against the drug menace if they had not made any drug-related arrests.

Arnaiz was apparently irked by the fact that many police stations in the province have had no anti-drug operations.

"Let us be frank about it. If you did not make any arrests on drug-related cases, you are not doing your job. If you will tell me that you don't have any drug problem in your area of jurisdiction, you are lying," Arnaiz said.

"No city or town in the province now is free from this problem, which is the number of 80 percent of the crimes taking place today," he added.

"That is why there are many rapes ... and other heinous crimes because of drugs. Don't wait [until] your children become victimized," said Arnaiz.

He also said a son of a policeman was recently arrested for a drug-related case.

Senior Supt. Marciano del Mar, police director for Negros Oriental, said the police were doing their best.

Frost destroys ₱35M in veggies

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—After millions of pesos were lost on vegetable production and recently on durian, people who refused to touch upland vegetables for fear of contracting cucurbitacin cucumis, farmers here have the weather as their newest adversary.

The Benguet agriculture office said temperatures regularly north at least 3°C within farm lines last since December because of frost on at least four towns in Benguet.

Belinda Juan, supervising agriculturist of Benguet, said if the temperature in Baguio falls to 10 degrees Celsius, it is usually 3 to 7 degrees Celsius in the vegetable-producing towns in Benguet.

Frost forms on the edge of the leaves and turns them to brown, a phenomenon here known as "sinday."

Juan said the most affected crops are carrots, cabbages, garden peas, potatoes and cauliflowers.

Of the four towns, Atok was the worst affected with damage placed at ₱20 million, she said.

Atok Mayor Constancio Bulao said more than 200 hectares of farmlands in his town were affected.

Juan said because of the mind-chill factor caused by the northeasterly winds in windiest, Atok's temperature would go down to 6 degrees.

Atok and Buguias are affected by the coldest because they are mostly valleys located at the gap of the mountain ranges where the wind blows, she said.

Baguias initially reported ₱5 million but Juan said the damage could be worse. Mankayan experienced frost as early as December and it reported ₱3 million in damages.

Kibungan reported ₱1.5 million in damages while Bagnagan, Bokod and La Trinidad towns have yet to submit their reports to the Benguet agriculture office.

Due to the effects of the frost, prices of vegetables have gone up.

Carrots sells for ₱35 a kilogram compared to ₱18 a kg two months ago. Sweet peas sell for ₱65 a kg while potatoes sell for ₱15 to ₱20 a kg, depending on their size.

Juan said the frost might continue until February.

"The crops are at their most vulnerable because they are still at the vegetative stage," Juan said. Frank Cimatu, *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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ENHANCED MCU MEDICAL CURRICULUM combines basics, ethics and multi-skill training

Graduates more prepared for board exams

Small group discussions sharpen problem-solving skills

The Manila Central University-Filemon D. Tanchoco Medical Foundation (MCU-FDTMF) College of Medicine has modified its innovative curriculum to enhance the professional quality and global competitiveness of its graduates.

One of the pioneers in adopting the problem-based learning (PBL) approach in medical education, MCU has finetuned its curriculum based on its PBL experience over the past eight years.

"Basics and principles of the PBL approach have been carefully incorporated into the modified curriculum, which builds on the strengths of the 'traditional' approach as well," explained Dr. Nenita Collantes, head of the MCU Medical Education Unit.

The core idea is to give medical students adequate preparation before immersing more in case studies designed to foster continuous self-learning. Toward this end, the curriculum has been structured along the various health-science disciplines—

e.g. pairing biochemistry plus physiology—with some special topics highlighting particular areas of study. The element of innovation comes in through various teaching and learning methodologies to suit the different learning styles of the students.

"We want to provide our students with a strong foundation in the basic sciences and thereby make it easier for them to understand and tackle the clinical sciences," Dr. Collantes said. "Aside from getting a higher quality of medical training, our students also emerge better prepared for the board exams, which are given by disciplines."

While preceding the basics, the modified innovative curriculum also nurtures students to become independent and life-long learners with finely honed skills in problem-solving, critical thinking, reflection, interpersonal relations and communication.

"Our large group activities, primarily the lectures, incorporate strategies in learning," Dr. Collantes pointed out. "On the other hand, small group activities—also known as PBL tutorial sessions—are intended mainly to deepen problem-solving skills."

The enhanced curriculum is not just about developing skills. The MCU College of Medicine's grading system monitors every student's performance in the three domains of learning: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective.

In order to enhance the attitude and value formation of the students, visits to communities and hospitals are offered from first to third year. Under this discipline comes various institutional values, doctor-patient communication skills, behavioral sciences, and bioethics. In Dr. Collantes' words, "an MCU medical student is first and foremost, a human being capable of reflection, self-understanding, holistic development, and most important of all, motivated to repose genuine caring for others."

Enhanced MCU med curriculum gets strong on basics

MCU medical grads leave their mark at home and abroad

Medical graduates of the Manila Central University can look forward to the task of unlimited mobility. Quality instruction, coupled with a strong service orientation, have molded them into professionals who can succeed in any environment.

Over the past 58 years, MCU has produced medical doctors who have distinguished themselves in various fields of specialization, as well as in allied areas like research, medical education and public service, in the Philippines and around the world.

During the university's recent seventy-ninth commencement, MCU honored some of its outstanding medical alumni.

Among them is Dr. Jacob Villarruel, MD, FPAS, now a professor of pediatrics and pharmacology at the Wayne State University in Detroit and chief clinical pharmacologist of the Children's Hospital of Michigan. A graduate of several books and studies in his field, Dr. Arnaldo developed his professional expertise in medical practice, research and instruction at McGill University and the Montreal Children's Hospital in Canada.

Another outstanding alumnus is Dr. Bonita G. Bong (MD, 1968), who started her career training in obstetrics to post Asian Medical Center and eventually found herself calling in public service. She served as mayor of Makati City from 1988 to 2001 and continues to be a member of the executive committee of the International Union of Local Authorities, Asia-Pacific Section. As president of the Makati Social Services Foundation and board member of the Digital ng Pilipinas Foundation, Dr. Bong has brought the quality of public service to the city's residents to new heights.

In the field of health science research, MCU is likewise making its mark, thanks to Dr. Constancio D.L. Adgo (MD, 1980), who has served as executive director of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development, Department of Science and Technology, and as assistant director of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine, Department of Health.

Among the MCU medical alumni who have taken up post-graduate courses are Dr. Herbert Jose Ramos (PE, 1966) and Dr. Concepcion Alexandra Roy (PD, 1962). Dr. Ramos started as lieutenant in the Medical Corps, Philippine Navy and eventually retired as Commander of the Medical Corps. Lt. Navy Dr. Roy started as a professor of medicine at MCU before joining the US Army Medical Corps based in Fort Hamilton, New York, where she retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel. At one point, she was the medical officer on call for General Oscar Boobby and the widow of General Douglas MacArthur. The first president of the MCU Alumni Foundation in America, Dr. Roy is back in the Philippines as an active professional, guest and an inspirational speaker of the Couples for Christ.

The university also ranks among the highest in terms of where the non-life community. Exemplifying this is Dr. Pedro A. Nepomuceno (PE, 1963), 1998 Ilaw Awardee for Rural Service and Most Outstanding Physician of Negros Occidental in 1988.

In fact, MCU has enjoyed the distinction of having the most medical graduates choosing to work in the rural areas. A Department of Health survey in the early 1980s revealed that majority of the municipal health officers serving the 1,000 towns with doctors were MCU graduates, according to Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan, who was chief of staff to the Health Secretary at the time.

MCU medical alumni give alma mater a boost

Medical alumni of the Manila Central University belong to a close-knit family with members all over the world.

Through the MCU Medical Alumni Association, which has active chapters in the Philippines and the United States, they are able to keep in touch with each other and to lend support to developments in their alma mater.

The MCUMAA in America—which has chapters in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Virginia, Illinois, California, Michigan, Missouri and Kentucky, among others—has been helping the university through its fund-raising runs, the MCU Medical Alumni Foundation. Donations of US-based alumni have made it possible for the MCU College of Medicine to upgrade its audio-visual equipment and reference library and to raise funds for scholarships and community programs.

Dr. Angelito B. Arenzol (PE, 1961), magna cum laudis graduate of the "eighteenth-year" batch, sums up his fellow alumni's general feeling of warmth toward MCU: "We feel a debt of gratitude to our medical school and university. We are committed to support our alma mater and to ensure its continued existence to promote the health and prosperity of our people in the Philippines. In doing so, we help repay the debt of opportunity open for those who choose to follow in our footsteps. The success story of us have achieved, we owe to the values that our parents and alma mater have instilled in us."

RP solons slam new US spy teams

Homepage Ad

Ad. Morning left Davao on a plane chartered by a certain International Medical Foundation and then flew out to Singapore a week later while he was facing charges of illegal possession of explosives, Pimentel said.

Evelio: No need for spies

Interpellating Pimentel, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said there was actually no need for the United States to spy on the country.

"We're an open country," Enrile said. "We talk to our men, just talk to some Filipinos in coffee shops."

In a statement, Pimentel said: "What is important is we cry as best as we can to prevent the US from treating the Philippines as a colony, treating the citizens of the country as if they were subjugated by Agence France-Presse in saying.

Some Majority leader Francis Pangilinan said the request of Pimentel for an inquiry would be referred to the Senate rules committee pending the creation of the oversight committee on intelligence.

Special forces in RP

In Washington, senior members of the US Congress said they would seek to determine whether the Pentagon had overstepped its boundary by creating the secret battalion of intelligence units within the Defense Intelligence Agency.

A senior military officer and a senior Pentagon official confirmed at a hastily called briefing that small teams of civilian intelligence specialists were being created to work with Special Operations forces and other troops worldwide on counterterrorism and other secret missions.

US Ambassador to the Philippines Francis Ricciardone told Manila-based foreign correspondents on Monday that "it's [RP] not our military personnel" were training troops in Mindanao to intelligence gathering.

The training led to the arrest or killing of "23 identified, known, un-doubtedly abusive terrorists" in the last year, Ricciardone said. He was quoted by Agence France-Presse in saying.

Units of the US Special Forces have been operating in Mindanao, with Philippine government approval, for the past few years and it was also clear from Ricciardone's statement if, or how their mission fitted in with the new US espionage concept.

The Washington Post had said the Philippines, as well as Indonesia, was among the target countries mentioned in an early planning document on the creation of the new spy group.

Pentagon confirms report

US military and Pentagon officials said the espionage teams had been formally established in the fiscal year 2005 defense budget setting counting authority to increase the number of Special Operations forces and other troops worldwide on counterterrorism and other secret missions.

"These teams would be involved in clandestine operations where their identities would not be known, but not necessarily operations," said a senior military official.

Covert operations require a special presidential "finding" and would be discussed by the United States if they were discovered.

In Washington, Ricciardone was quoted by Agence France-Presse in saying.

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"Troops and Congress and set up an under-the-radar capability which Congress doesn't know about is not OK," Rep. Jane Harman, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, said in a statement.

Rep. Gen. John W. Warner, R-Va., who heads the armed services committee, said he was concerned that these teams were "vital to our national security interests" and that their existence was included in Pentagon budget documents that the committees reviewed and approved.

What's in a name?

The Pentagon officials said Congress had been informed about the teams during the budget this summer but that year, but they said the names of the units and their role changed during the budget process, to Strategic Support Teams from Human Augmentation Teams, possibly explaining the confusion.

US defense officials said the formation of the spy teams was part of a broader effort to revise its human intelligence capabilities.

The new "strategic support teams" will be tailored to the specific requirements of US combatant commanders and deployed wherever there is sound for them, said senior defense and military officials, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

The officials said parent organization of the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA) human intelligence section, the agency's espionage arm, is with military operations was not new.

Human intelligence

The capture of Saddam Hussein resulted from work by a DIA official who brought interrogation skills at the task but no Arabic language skills, the military official said.

"We know had [Defense Human Resources Activity] people hovered with commanders all the way back to early Afghanistan," he said.

But he said that as demand mounted for people with intelligence skills, that "we're finding we're fighting a long-term war "we're basically a pick-up team" while drawing on capabilities that were snatched elsewhere.

In support of an effort to strengthen human intelligence, the DIA established the plan to form small teams that would be rotated into places where US forces were operating.

"The teams are Human Resource Intelligence teams so that for us to people who have skills as case officers, interrogators, debriefers and people that would provide support to those skill sets," he said. They also would include analysts as well.

Bunye welcomes US support

In Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the Philippines welcomed US support in fighting local terrorists and rejecting reports to the contrary.

"The Philippines and the United States continue to uphold a strategic partnership for peace, freedom and global security based on a common fight against poverty," he said in a statement.

Bunye insisted the statement of last 10 months reports said that the Philippines had been mentioned in the early US planning as among the places where the new espionage units could be deployed.

Bunye said the United States and the Philippines "fight terror, wage peace for the cause of the people who want to walk the streets and till the fields without fear, engaging in productive enterprise in lead a dignified life."

Earnest threats

"The earnest threats of the United States are well taken and will be supported by the people," Bunye said. *With reports from Artemio Latiff-Dumlao, New York Times, AFP*

Mike to Jamby: No apology, only reconciliation

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idators," Defensor said in an interview on his way to inspect a cache of unspotted "hot logs" at the port of Manila.

Defensor still enjoys the trust of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President was "unlikely" to lend calls for his replacement. "He is on track in the anti-illegal logging drive," Bunye said.

Madrigal has described Defensor as the "mike hunter" [himself hog] of the stress administration, and he may well be.

Spice Boy

Defensor, a family friend of the Arroyos, led the group of young congressmen dubbed the "Spice Boys" that spearheaded the impeachment move against President Joseph Estrada.

He was among the first to be appointed in the Cabinet—as housing czar—when Mr Arroyo assumed President after Edsa II in 2001.

Defensor got the coveted job of being Mr. Arroyo's campaign spokesperson during the May 2004 presidential election. Defensor, seen as a successful candidate in 2004, was then appointed head of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"The Filipino people have no commitment and I will resign out of dedication—nobody has to tell me—if I have not been doing my job and letting my guard down [against environmental violators]," the environment secretary said.

Asked how he took the apology offered to Madrigal by his own aunt, administration Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, the other day, he said: "That's just OK. She's my tita and she was just helping to defuse down the tension."

Unsupported claim

Santiago appealed to Madrigal to withdraw her plan to file libel charges against her "favorite nephew on account of his" young age," saying the secretary displayed "reckless disregard of [press] duties."

The environment chief got Madrigal's ire for suggesting to double Interviews over the weekend that she was in opposition to criticize his campaign against illegal logging because her own family had logging interests in Aurora and Quezon, aside from owning two mining firms.

Defensor, however, failed to support his claim that the Madrigals owned logging concessions and mining companies.

No reconciliation

"At the very moment he succeeded, by reconciliation [on Monday], his very own trusted men were going around in the Senate distributing to journalists stolen white envelopes an unverified and incomplete dossier about me and my family's business interests. His very own people were intimidating my office by asking private and personalized questions regarding my family," she said.

Madrigal said she would file libel and other administrative charges against Defensor.

She said she intended to seek damages for the "smear" done to her family, but added that any recommendation ordered by the court would go to the victims of the mudslides and landslides in Aurora and Quezon provinces last year.

A portion of the award, if granted by the court, would also fund the massive reforestation of the denuded Sierra Madre mountain range, the senator said at a press conference.

Madrigal believed that the amount of indemnity should be commensurate to the full cost of the death and destruction caused by rampant illegal logging in the two provinces.

Stabbing my back

Madrigal said that Defensor's "blatant lie" that her family was engaged in mining and logging operations in Quezon and Aurora was an attack on the Senate as well.

She said that the very moment Defensor was asking her to settle their differences over misrepresented policies, "he was stabbing my back by [saying] that I [or] came to harass for private ops."

But Madrigal said she wished [Administration to reach the typhoon-hit areas last month upon the instruction of an infamous bishop to check the extent of the damage. As the time, just one national leader had visited the town of Crowned Nahas, Infanta and Real, she said.

Madrigal said Defensor should solemnly consider stopping destructive storm and more groups warned him out of the province, Inquirer mentioned. *With a report from Juliet Labog-Javellana*

He fought Reds, plotters but quits war vs illegal loggers

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frontlines of the anti-illegal logging campaign.

"Let us just wait," he said, when asked how he would assess the progress so far of Make ratings's drive against illegal logging.

Vision fades

President Macapagal-Arroyo last December gave Cognio the main tasks of running after illegal loggers and overseeing a national replanting program after typhoon Yolanda killed more than 1,000 people in Quezon and Aurora and Nueva Ecija in November and December.

Some government officials have blamed rampant illegal logging in the Sierra Madre, which abuts the three provinces, for the disasters. Some forestry experts attribute the calamities to various other factors, including the natural geological features of the Sierra Madre mountain range.

Recently after being named by Mr Arroyo to his desk post last month, Cognio had expressed hope he could make a difference in the campaign against illegal logging.

"I will be an all-out war. Mobilizing your-ing helicopters wars dive (We will be rolling with powerful people here)," Cognio said then.

Cognio had also cautioned a "pro-people program," involving aggressive information, which would provide work to recalcitrant communities, including rebels of the communist New People's Army, who he allegedly benefit from illegal logging themselves by taxing the people engaged in it.

Linked success

To date, the anti-Illegal Logging Task Force, jointly led by Cognio and Environment Secretary Jesse Robredo, has had limited success in bringing culprits to justice.

Defensor has announced the filing of criminal charges against three mayors, a former congressman and a barangay captain allegedly involved in illegal cutting of trees, but people, including Madrigal challenged Defensor to go after the big fish.

Seeking to contribute to the campaign, Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes yesterday urged local government officials to augment the police and military resources in order to protect the country's remaining forests.

One guard per 4,000 ha

Reyes said that at present, there was only one forest guard for every 4,000 hectares of forest.

In a directive, Reyes also ordered local officials to lead in the reforestation of denuded mountains and mobilize their constituents, community civil society and the public in rescue part in the campaign.

"The disastrous aftermath of the typhoons that hit the country recently, which led to untold deaths and damage to lives and property, underlines the continuing unresolved assault on our remaining forests," he said.

Reyes also urged local executives to "undertake strong management efforts with those of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, including reporting illegal logging activities in their localities.

Only 1,800 forest rangers

The DENR has only 3,000 forest rangers to protect the country's 15 million hectares of forestland. The department says it needs at least 27,000 more forest guards to meet the ideal ratio of one forest guard per 500 hectares of forestland. *With a report from Inhuan E. Flores*

Joker hits 'anomalous' IPPs' VAT exemptions

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ton tonnie and outside Congress.

The newly signed law provides a measure by which employees of private corporations agencies who received their collection targets get a share of the excess, while those who fail to meet their targets for fiscal 0 is expected to raise P670 billion a year.

IPPs VAT exempt

In the Senate, administration Sen. Joker Arroyo is opposing the proposed changes in the VAT the committee version.

The senator said the proposed changes would cost you to Congress should the measure continues to exempt independent power producers (IPPs) from the VAT.

Arroyo noted that the committee-approved amendments to the VAT law, which is now being deliberated by members of the House on the floor, did not list the exemption of IPPs from paying the income.

"Yes, IPPs are making a lot of money making customers pay for power, they produce but which the public does not use, and the totality of the rates they pay is a measly 3 percent of their gross sales," the senator said in a statement.

Arroyo couldn't help but ask "what unseen hand is there that IPPs are so protected, as privileged as they are compared to the people the burden they give to the public."

This development was an "anomaly," said Arroyo who pointed to two other anomalies relating to the IPPs.

The first anomaly came in a result of National Power Corp.'s "unconscionable contracts" with the IPPs which have been "one of the biggest causes of the country's fiscal problem," he said.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago had also criticized last week the bulk of Napocor's debt of P1.3 trillion was due to the IPPs.

Anomalous insertion

Another anomaly, Arroyo said, was when a provision was "mysteriously inserted" in the bill approved by the bicameral conference committee in May 2003. The bill became the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira).

The insertion that was inserted in Section 8 of the Epira granted IPPs zero-related privilege in 1996, "therefore effectively making IPPs VAT-exempt," the senator said.

"Everybody pretends not to see this, but it's here in black and white. In fact, if we repealed that one sentence then they (IPPs) would no longer be exempt," he said in a press conference.

Now, Arroyo said, there were attempts to condition the minds of the public into accepting an increase in the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent "that would hit the lower middle classes more, contrary to Medici's campaign promise to reduce the burden on the poor," Neda refers to the National Economic and Development Authority.

The American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (Amcham) said an increase in the VAT from 10 percent to 12 percent would impose a serious burden on the poor and would to confirm this enterprises, and lead to greater tax avoidance.

The government has said that an increase in VAT would raise an extra P70 billion.

Position paper

In a position paper, Amcham said: "Increased VAT rate merely translates to higher prices of goods to consumers and end-users."

"Think the current economic recovery, it is highly doubtful if the 10% value-added tax (VAT) rate will result in higher revenue collections," the position paper said.

"Employers likewise may not be prepared to incur additional expenditures, particularly at this time of economic crises," the business group said.

It said small and medium-scale enterprises account for 99 percent of the total number of enterprises in the country, 66 percent of all jobs created and 45 percent of total exports.

Support from Arroyo

Senator Arroyo said there was an economic proposition that says that "taxation is a tool for redistribution of wealth."

"The VAT being deliberated upon would do the opposite, the reverse of redistribution," Arroyo said.

The senator's proposal to scrap the full exemption enjoyed by IPPs has gained the support of Rep. Rolando Andaya (2nd Camarines Sur).

Andaya said IPPs should be taxed like them. "We can remove the zero-rated VAT status of IPPs. But on the same time, we can have goodies exempted," Andaya said.

Noodles and other processed food items are among the goods covered by the proposed 12 percent VAT.

In Malacañang, the President said she was open to a compromise on the bill raising the VAT rate could pass.

"We are willing to listen to all well-meaning proposals in this direction, whether those come from administration allies, the opposition or concerned groups that have the interest of the people to mind," she said in a speech during the signing of the anti-rape law, the second of eight she expects to sign before Congress.

Mr Arroyo is making a strong pitch for the VAT rate hike, which an enormous has pondered the public.

"These should be no division between pro-business or pro-labor advocates. We must all be for one, united stable and prosperous nation," she said.

The VAT rate hike has been vigorously pushed by administration lawmakers and big business because of its huge revenue impact—P223 billion or nearly half of the President's desired revenue increase of P460 billion.

Safety nets

To ease the fears of the public, the President said her administration would ensure that an increase in the VAT rate would not lead to higher prices of basic commodities.

"Even the start, we have successfully worked with Congress to build the safety nets to cushion the impact of new taxes on the poor," she said.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the economic team had been advised of the President's position to open the door from the new taxes.

Bunye said the VAT system was not applied to the sale of raw farm products and fish, sale of real property used for low-cost and socialized housing, and lease of residential units of less than P8,000 per month.

While Amcham is against a VAT rate increase, an American bank is supporting it.

The clincher

In its Asia Economics Weekly, Citigroup, the world's biggest financial institution, said: "The passage of the two percent additional tax rate hike for VAT is crucial in carrying the perception that the post fiscal situation is about to turn the corner. Passage of the latest action bill stacks up the fiscal measures, paves the way for more fiscal clarity and the clincher would be the passage of the VAT increase."

With its potential of generating P223 billion in extra revenues a year, Citigroup said "the contribution of the VAT law proposal would be a significant step regarding likely to underpin a favorable perception and enhance local investment segment. One of the risks of a credit rating downgrade." *With reports from Ruth Lesaffre and Cai Ibo Pablo*

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US excludes RP from $1.5-B aid list

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE UNITED STATES government has excluded the Philippines from the list of countries eligible for a $1.5-billion reconstruction aid, which is being administered by Millennium Challenge Corp. (MCC), citing underperformance in fighting corruption and easing its fiscal woes.

Gap Lowery, MCC vice president for market assessment, said the American state-owned corporation decided to put the Philippines only under the threshold status because the country failed to sufficiently address its problems on corruption and unhealthy fiscal standing.

A country under the threshold status is one that does not qualify for the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), the US grant given to selected poor countries, but may eventually qualify if appropriate policy reforms are implemented.

The MCA, according to the US government, is given to poor countries that are "ruling justly," "investing in their people," and "encouraging economic freedom."

For 2005, the US government has allotted $1.5 billion for the MCA. Ninety percent of the amount will be automatically given to the eligible countries in fiscal various anti-poverty projects, while the remaining 10 percent will be given to countries that will be selected from the list of "threshold" countries.

The Philippines is given until March 15 to submit project or program proposals that may be funded by the MCA, and to defend why it should qualify for the international aid.

Countries that made it to the eligible list are: Morocco, Armenia, Benin, Bolivia, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Senegal, Sri Lanka, and Vanuatu.

On the other hand, countries that only made it to the threshold status, aside from the Philippines, are: Burkina Faso, Guyana, Malawi, Paraguay, and Zambia.

"Corruption and its macroeconomic policies are still the issues confronting the Philippines," Lowery said in a press briefing.

Earlier, the Asian Development Bank said in a study that the Philippines' tax structure was ranked loopholed and encouraged corruption and tax evasion. It said that corporate taxpayers in the Philippines, on the average, declared only 77 percent of their revenue, therefore evading paying proper taxes.

The ADB also cited the Global Competitiveness Report for 2003 and 2004, which said the Philippines ranked as the sixth worst performer, among 102 countries, in the area of tax collection due to delinquency and bribery.

The Philippines' pressing fiscal problems, characterized by a recurring budget deficit and burgeoning debt, was the reason it suffered from a credit-rating downgrade by international ratings firm Standard & Poor's. The rating agency downgraded the Philippines' foreign currency debt

(to B2)

Peso hits new high of 55.35:$1

THE PESO yesterday closed at a new year-high of 55.35 to $1 as calls from some Philippine leaders for Asian central banks to let their currencies rise further fueled bullish sentiment in the region.

The local currency continued to firm up even as the US dollar regained some lost ground against the yen and the euro ahead of the release of the latest US growth data, the central bankers in Iraq and a Group of Seven (G7) meeting.

The peso opened at the intra-day low of 55.38 and hit an intra-day high of 55.31. Trading volume at the Philippine Dealing System remained robust at $[illegible], it gained another 5 centavos from Monday's close of 55.40 to the dollar.

It also stood resilient to pressures arising from profit-taking in the stock market, which corrected yesterday after rising above the 2,000 resistance level for the first time in five years.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura attributed the peso's sustained rally to "strong regional markets, weak corporate demand and continued inflows of remittances and portfolio investments."

The BSP chief said the strong foreign ex-

(to B2)

Shares finish lower

[illegible] finished lower yesterday on a technical correction after four sessions of gains, traders said.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index ended below its 2,000-point psychological support with a loss of 24.86 points, or 1.2 percent, to 1,980.39. That followed a 6.8 percent rise in the past four consecutive sessions, including Monday's 1.4-percent gain to 2,016.25, its highest close in nearly five years.

The commercial-industrial banks sectoral index rose, and all shares sub-indexes ended lower, while the property, mining, and oil sub-indexes closed higher. Decliners led gainers 11 to 10, while 10 stocks were unchanged.

Total volume of shares traded thinned to 8.89 billion shares worth of P1.19 billion from Monday's 8.10 billion shares worth P1.38 billion.

"This was the long overdue correction the market has been waiting for," said AB Capital Securities research director Jose Vilan.

Dimzon said this was one of the rare times that market participants were pleased with the market's retreat.

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Atlas in talks with Chinese groups for Toledo mine reopening

GMA-7 '05 capex seen to hit ₱500M

By Elizabeth L. Gamboa

ATLAS Consolidated Mining and Development Corp. said it was holding negotiations with Chinese mining groups for the possible resumption of mining operations in Atlas' copper mine in Toledo, Cebu.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Atlas Consolidated said these Chinese groups had expressed strong interest to participate in the reopening of the copper mine. It, however, did not identify these groups.

Also, Atlas said it had approved a memorandum of agreement with Toledo Mining Corp. (TMC), where the latter had relinquished its rights to the Toledo copper project. The memorandum for other groups to participate in the development of the mine.

A study by Behre Dolbear Australia Ltd. showed that the reopening of the Toledo Copper mine would cost $175 million, inclusive of the pursing up of a 5.6 megawatt power plant. At current metal prices, the mine will generate some $516 million or P8.23 billion in foreign exchange yearly, it added.

Over the last 30 years, three major open-pit operations have been undertaken in the property. Atlas has mined a total of approximately 607 metric tons of ore at the Toledo mine.

TMC said it would focus on nickel projects of Atlas, particularly those in Palawan, under an agreement. Atlas retains a substantial interest in TMC's future nickel operations. Atlas diluted its 66 percent interest in achieving the nickel project in Palawan to 35.3 percent. Atlas will retain 43 percent interest in another nickel project in Hagan town in Palawan.

TMC will invest $1 million for the development of these nickel projects. The amount will come exclusively from $1 million in funding provided earlier by Australian-listed holding firm Investkit Ltd.

Investkit, under an earlier agreement, holds the right to acquire 118 percent of Atlas' stake in the Berong nickel project. The Berong nickel project in Palawan contains an estimated resource of 275 million tons of nickel products. Discussions are ongoing with Japanese Iron nickel smelters for the development of the first stage of the project, which may start this year.

Atlas was established through the merger of the assets and equities of three business conglomerates — the Madrigal Consolidated Mining Co., DG Mining Co. and the Amatonk Gold&Silver Mining Co.

Atlas is engaged in mineral land minerals mining and exploration.

MacroAsia, Singapore company form logistics services venture

By Cielvira S. Ibañez

MACROASIA Corp., the listed air-cargo services company of Vulcan Lo-ao Tan, has formed a joint venture with SembCorp Logistics of Singapore to provide third-party logistics services to the local market.

Sembilog is listed as the Singapore firm's name and is set to be the Philippine arm of the investment, complete its Asian network. It now operates in 15 countries in Asia.

Sembilog MacroAsia Philippines will manage and execute customized logistics functions of its clients, using the strength of the local partner's links with affiliate airlines and aviation support units in tandem with the Singaporean firm's supply chain expertise.

"This venture is consistent with the goal of Macroasia to become an integrated logistics provider in the Philippines, particularly in areas near the airports," said Macroasia president Joseph Ong in a statement.

The new joint venture will initially focus on the export-oriented electronics industry, which in 2003 accounted for about 46 percent of the country's total export shipments.

Sembilog MacroAsia is also targeting multi-national companies in the Philippines expected to those that are already doing business with the Singaporean firm.

It will also explore opportunities in outsole logistics and collateral management for commodities—including food, sugar and rice.

"It unleash like our a unique. We have supply chain coverage in all the growth markets of the future and we are able to assist customers in FMCG, healthcare, in specialty logistics like metals and collateral management. By being able to operate within a country and across borders, we will be a multiplier effect which will benefit Sembilog, our country partners and our customers," said Bob Sim Kwang, Sembilog president in a statement.

Since 2000, Sembilog has been expanding its network across Asia. The company said managing its customers' supply chains on a regional basis would deliver greater efficiency and cost savings.

Peso hits new . . .

Previous A1

change inflation news, to note, curbing pressures on domestic interest rates.

"Interest rates have gone down because foreign fund flows are good. In other words, there's liquidity in the system and that's why interest rates are softening," Buenaventura said.

In the meantime, Melendrez said that a rejuvenated peso and a bullish stock market were a sure of confidence in the Philippine economics.

"The buoyancy of the economy, an equitable revenue program and a strong fiscal equator can trigger an era of the stage for a decisive turnaround that will bring in more investments and jobs," President Macapagal-Arroyo said. Boris C. Dimitov and Jeff C. Cabacungan Jr.

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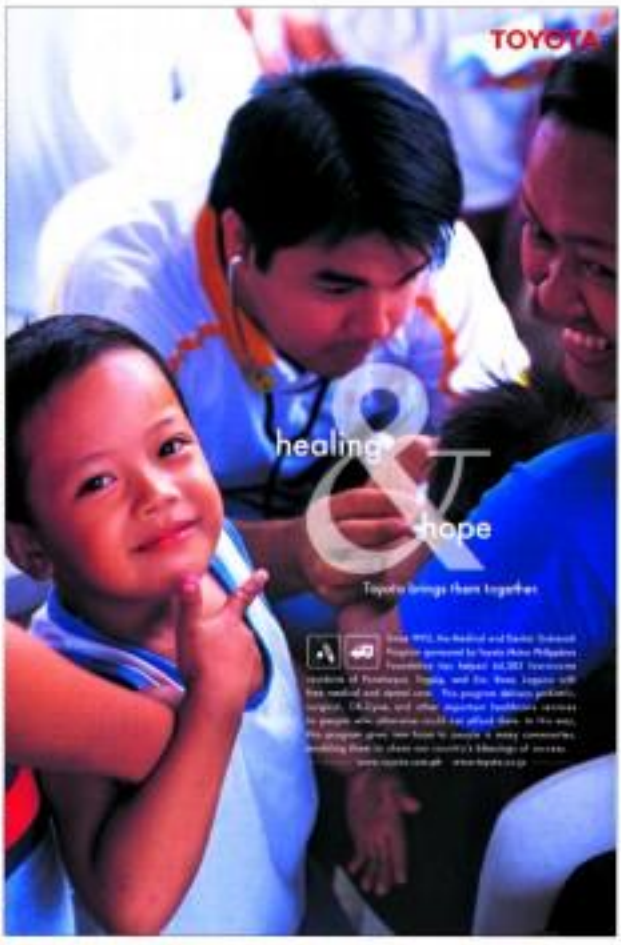

Bayantel makes third payment of ₱135M

By Clarissa S. Bisking

BAYAN Telecommunications Inc., the phone company of the Lopez Group, is scheduled to make another ₱135-million installment of interest payment to its creditors by March after a court-appointed receiver supported its debt settlement plan.

Salvador Vitteta, Bayantel chief finance officer, said the court-appointed receiver Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co. submitted its report to the court.

The receiver's submission, according to Vitteta, says "move or less in line" with Bayantel's own debt cut plan.

The Lopez firm, a subsidiary of Benpres Holdings Corp., said it had made one-sixth of ₱5.20 million in interest payments to creditors since September and the other in December.

"The receiver's term sheet is consistent with the internal schedule we made," Vitteta said. "In March, we are ready to pay another ₱135 million."

The company would use internally generated funds to pay its lenders.

Bayantel is hoping that creditors would no longer object to the rehab plan after the receiver submitted his term sheet.

Creditors earlier questioned why Bayantel was paying interest based on a term sheet that was not the receiver's, Vitteta said.

"The receiver's term sheet did not differ much from ours," the Bayantel official explained. "It's not to say to the court to decide."

Vitteta had assured creditors that stage is in debt restructuring would not affect the company's recovery and near-term prospects.

"We recognize the right of our creditors to question certain terms of the rehabilitation plan and we really hope for a speedy resolution on the matter by the Court of Appeals so we can move forward and focus on sustaining the momentum of our business," said Vitteta earlier in a statement.

RP trade deficit drops to $924M in '04

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE COUNTRY's trade deficit in the first 11 months of 2004 went down to $924 million from $1.369 billion recorded in the same period in 2003.

According to the National Statistics Office, exports of electronics, garments and automotive parts also rose 10 percent during the period.

The country normally posted a trade surplus of $223 million in November last year, compared with a deficit of $191 million in the same month of 2003, the NSO yesterday reported.

The country's trade in goods are seen to reach a balance this year as demand for Philippine exports of hot-float electronics are seen to improve in 2005.

Better prospects for Philippine food industries are also seen this year, said Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Philippine Exporters Confederation president.

"The composition of the country's exports has included garments and automotive parts ... we are not just relying on electronics exports," Ortiz-Luis said of the buoyancy.

Total national trade in goods for January to November 2004 amounted to $73.05 billion, up by 8 percent from $67.3 billion during the same period in 2003.

The NSO said that the country imported around $37.3 billion worth of products, an increase of 8.2 percent from the $34 billion recorded in 2003.

But the country's exports – mainly to Japan, United States and Europe – rose 7.6 percent to $36 billion.

According to Ortiz-Luis, there may be a slowdown in both the production and exports in the first and second quarters of the year, but this should not be a cause for concern as the transaction of orders are usually done around this time.

Growth in consumer goods shows consumer demand remains healthy, according to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri.

Neri, citing NSO data, said that imported consumer products rose 17.6 percent year-on-year, but declined from 23.7 percent in October.

Passenger cars inched up 19.11 percent and imports of raw chickens, milk or dairy products and fruits and vegetables, meat up 21.47 percent.

Commodities' import growth rose much at 8.2 percent, amounting to $37.3 billion. NSO reports totaling $36.3 billion for the eleven-month period, the balance of trade stands at a deficit of $924 million.

The Neda chief noted that save in other major groups recorded growth, the contraction in capital goods pulled down the total.

Meantime, the NSO also reported that the country's volume of production, as based on the index, posted an 8.7 percent growth in November 2004.

NERI

Sectors that exhibited significant expansion in output were furniture and fixtures, leather products, rubber products, wood and wood products, publishing and printing, transport equipment, paper and paper products, beverage industries, electrical machinery.

With a report from Reuters

DOF mulls over proposal to slash income tax by half

By Ma. Jodie V. Barro

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance will study the proposal to slash by half the income tax liabilities of individuals and its impact on the government's already weak revenue position.

The legislative proposal to lower individual income tax rates, raised by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, would only relieve the BOF's support if it would not result in a decline in tax collection, the agency said.

"If [Enrile] has not discussed it with us yet," Finance Undersecretary Noel Ilamson yesterday told reporters. "But we may look at his proposal favorably if it will indeed spur consumption."

In an explanatory note attached to Senate Bill No. 1196, Enrile said poor families should be spared from economic difficulties, such as rising cost of consumer products, through lower income tax liabilities.

He brushed aside fears that lower income tax rates for individual taxpayers would mean a downturn in government collections.

Enrile explained that lower taxes would actually strengthen consumers' purchasing power and spur economic activity.

Under Enrile's proposed bill, all income tax rates shall be reduced by half. This means that the income tax of 32 percent, which is imposed on individual taxpayers earning less than ₱30,000 and which is the minimum individual income tax rate, will be reduced to only 2.5 percent.

This also means that individuals earning more than ₱600,000 will have to pay an income tax equivalent of only ₱62,500 plus 17.5 percent of the amount in excess of ₱600,000. This is lower than their present income tax liabilities of ₱125,000 plus 34 percent of the amount in excess of ₱500,000.

The DOF earlier said it is studying the possibility of changing the system of collecting income tax from corporate taxpayers, particularly by imposing a two-tiered tax structure.

Under the plan, the income tax rate imposed on corporations will be raised to 40 percent from the current uniform rate of 32 percent, while small-scale businesses will be imposed a rate lower than 32 percent.

Tasked with solving the government's fiscal problems, the DOF is actively pushing for various revenue-raising proposals like increase in various taxes.

The DOF is spearheading the Arroyo administration's medium-term agenda of reining in the budget deficit by generating at least ₱180 billion more in additional revenues a year.

The deficit stood at ₱286.1 billion last year, or well within the official ceiling of ₱307.8 billion.

The government is targeting to reduce the deficit to zero by 2010, but said the achievement of fiscal consolidation could be accelerated to 2008.

Tarlac power co-op secures Transco assets

By Abigail L. Ho

THE NATIONAL Transmission Corp. (Transco) recently signed a lease purchase agreement with the Tarlac Electric Cooperative Inc. (Tarelco) II, the first such agreement with a cooperative in Luzon, for some of its sub-transmission assets.

So far Transco has sold ₱950 million worth of sub-transmission assets in various electric cooperatives in the country. Three cooperatives, however, are all from the Visayas and Mindanao grids.

The Tarelco II lease purchase agreement covers 63 structures along the Concepcion-Tarlac II 69-kilovolt (kV) line.

Under Transco's lease purchase-like financing program, electric cooperatives just have to pay a downpayment equivalent of 20 percent of the sub-transmission assets' selling price.

The balance will then be amortized over a period not exceeding 15 percent of the assets' remaining life.

Upon remittance of the 20 percent downpayment, Transco will turn over to the electric cooperative the responsibility of operating and maintaining the assets.

However, transfer of the actual ownerships of the assets will only take place upon full payment of the balance.

"This is only the first month of the year, and yet we have inked several signings related to our efforts to sell our sub-transmission assets," Transco president and chief executive Alex Orbe said in a statement yesterday. "We have finally broken ground with electric cooperatives in Luzon and are eager to sign more contracts this year."

Later this year, Transco expects to sell some ₱700 million worth of sub-transmission assets in the Mindoro group and to the Luzon's Manila Electric Co.

Transco plans to fully divest its ownership of 7,547 circuit kilometers of 69-kV lines within this year.

'04 food exports barely up to $1.5B

By Ronnel W. Domingo

EXPORT receipts on food products are expected to reach a total of $1.57 billion in 2004, an increase of 0.3 percent from the $1.56 billion posted in 2003, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

DTI documents showed that the figure would be reached as exports in the first 10 months had already hit $1.31 billion.

To perk up export growths of food products, the DTI said it was running in a new approach in promoting exports starting with a business matching runs inside exhibits for buyers and marketers.

The Bureau of Export Trade Promotion said the program generated an initial $166,000-worth of orders.

Trade Undersecretary Thomas G. Aquino, who is in charge of intra-national trade, said the results of the program "proved that the country's food products are high-quality and meets the discriminating taste of foreign buyers."

AEPP said the recently concluded program attracted 16 local manufacturers of banana, confectionery, nuts, juices, canned tuna, sardines, dried mangoes, banana chips and snack foods, as well as buyers from Singapore, South Africa and Japan.

The bureau said more orders were expected as more foreign buyers would visit manufacturing plants of the participating food companies.

Confectionery and honey exports are expected to reach $24.27 million in 2004 or a 13.3-percent increase from the 2003 figure.

Also, exports of cereal and flour preparations—including biscuits—are estimated to reach $43 million last year, up by 3.6 percent from the 2003 level.

Still, the BETP said local food makers needed to be sensitive about the requirements of buyers to ensure a steady increase in sales.

BETP director Fernando Cide said that while buyers where pleased with the country's fine cut of food products, they wanted labels to indicate the expiry date, list sorting, ingredients and product status.

Buyers also want products to state the kind of spices used as well as their source.

Cocktales

Previous B6

...from the national capital [illegible] for loans standing [illegible], since the Lumenos' first railroad rights were only 30 percent, or just half of the entire 48 percent that has a requiring it was the bankrupt Italian majority shareholder.

• PHILCOMSAT Holdings Corp. [illegible] a fund P150-million in the premises of Cardinal to finance the acquisition of mobile works equipment. The loan is guaranteed by the president's assigned revenue allotments.

• Two pieces of property of Ong Yiong Tee, the family behind the shuttered Philippine Bobbin Tex company, in Santa Cruz are set to be auctioned by the Manila shariff next month to pay off about P60 million in debt to Chinabank. It is not immediately clear if one of the two lots includes the Philippine Bobbin Tex terminal on Avenida Rizal.

• FORMER Revenue Commissioner Rene Banlac has been appointed as a senior vice president of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

Heard through the grapevine

EMILIO Boy Jr. and Lopez were as a possible trade and industry secretary was apparently informed late in the day as the post to be vacated with the impending transfer of Cesar Purisima to the finance department had already been reserved for, and accepted by, Rizalito Jose Santos.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@philstar.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com.)

BSP tightens rules on forex dealers

From page B1

...they learned that the transactions were done for the purpose of laundering proceeds of criminal or other illegal activities.

For this purpose, covered transactions refer to cash or cash-equivalent transactions involving a total amount in excess of P500,000 within one banking day.

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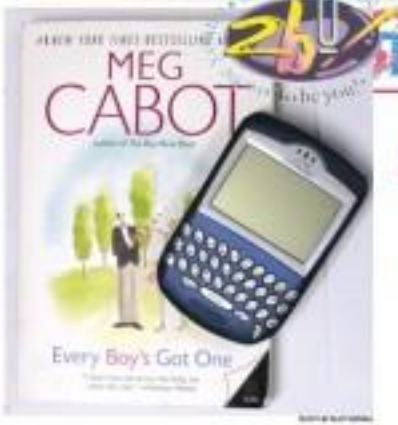

STYLE

Editor Chelo Bacod-Formoso
Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor

Blackberry cheesecake

This gadget has moved beyond just being a wireless tool for communication. It's becoming a pop culture staple

By Pam Pastor

THE BLACKBERRY gadget plays an important role in Meg Cabot's latest offering, "Every Boy's Got One." The four main characters each own a unit and a lot of the story is told through messages sent using their Blackberry pagers.

It can be said that the gadget was a key player in the book—just as it was a key player in my life for a few weeks.

I have to admit, it wasn't enthusiast at first sight.

But just as I was upset with the precious Blackberry 6230 was enough to lend me one.

Imagine being able to receive your e-mails anywhere, anytime, without having to sit in front of a computer or carry your laptop around. That is what's cool Blackberry is magic.

The first thing I did after getting the Blackberry was to create a new e-mail address, with the help of super-angelic Sam Cobbs. You can manipulate your old ones as well, but since it was a temporary set-up, I chose not to.

Because I knew that my time with the Blackberry would be short, I realized I started getting swamped with mail, I decided to pass the new e-mail address on my website and ask people to mail me a hand by sending me e-mail my way.

I asked them to tell me about their day, their life, their fears, dreams and nightmares. I asked about their secrets, the people in their life.

Soon, messages were pouring in.

But people around me were still a bit apprehensive.

My brother, who is left-handed, mentioned that the Blackberry's scroll isn't exactly lefty-friendly. Want tokay.

My boyfriend, a big tech freak himself, just rolled his eyes at me, saying that he could access his IE here mail with GPRS anyway. The rolling stopped, though, when I showed him that the Blackberry at least ran on Smartband and open architecture.

And unlike your normal GPRS capable mobile phone, the Blackberry pager allows your e-mails come in like text messages would.

Irreparable

The Blackberry became my constant companion. It was my connection to the outside world—a mobile phone and e-mail station rolled into one.

Soon, it was as if the unit was glued to my hands. I cannot count the number of times my boyfriend had to give me the phone just that gadget away was in the middle of a video episode.

He was simply incorrigible. I whipped it out while stuck in traffic. It stayed with me during trips to the mall and during hours at the cinema. I made time gaps on long road trips by answering e-mails. During one pit stop, I was surprised to receive mail from an old grade school friend who left our school in sixth grade. Catching up was made easy by Blackberry magic.

The real gem on the gift of convenience, the ability to reach out to the world no matter where I was. It was easy to send out work related e-mails. I didn't even have to open my files for the lack of structure, which I normally had to do when using Yahoo! GPRS.

During mobile phone reviews, I always have one big question: could it be a replacement for my own phone?

Still I'm able to abandon what I have gotten used to and what I love and use this cute gadget without the support of my old one? Can it fulfill what I demand from my own phone and not leave me wanting?

With the Blackberry, the answer was yes. It was easy to use, despite people's misgivings about the tiny QWERTY keyboard. And despite its size, even long phone conversations are comfortable. I should know, I tried it.

Celebrity fans

My fling with the Blackberry lasted only a few months.

And apparently, I'm not the only one.

According to USA Today, 2005 is going to be an even bigger year for Blackberry. "The popular e-mail pager that's become a must-have equipment for movers in Hollywood and Washington and on Wall Street, dubbed users refer to it as 'CrackBerry.'

In fact, in a study by branding firm Lipsker Interbrand and research firm Ipsos, Schools Refined in the United States, Blackberry is number one on the list of things that are going to be hot in 2005. The list also includes Google, iPod, "Desperate Housewives" and Oprah.

Apparently the Blackberry pager has a loyal, fan base of celebrities and politicians. Madonna Breakwick was seen showing off her new pink-white protecting "The Angelard Silver" last year. Steve Oprah is a fan. In 2003, she mentioned the Blackberry pager among her 3-wacky things for Christmas.

"This has literally changed my life. You don't have to be at your computer to send or receive an e-mail. It sends and receives e-mail messages like a cellphone. It's literally free, me," she said on the show.

Of course, 200 lucky audience members went home with their own pagers. Just last week, comedian actor Jerry Glover's Blackberry and started reading her e-mails. A source says: HOORAY! Thanks Bella a laughable quote: "She was pretty upset about it. It's one thing to have people looking at your personal e-mails as a real invasion of privacy."

Celebrity or no celebrity, it cannot be denied that this gadget has power.

Web test

The official website of the Blackberry pager (www.blackberry.com) has a test that people can use to gauge their need for this productivity tool. Do you receive [xxx-xxxx-xxxx] e-mail, or more than 15 e-mail messages per day? How much time do you spend away from your desk? Are you, or is your job, dependent on e-mail? Do you need flexible ways to stay in touch with friends and colleagues? Would you benefit from having access to your e-mail and the Web while on the go?

Take the test. You may not know it yet, but your lifestyle might just be crying out for a double dose of Blackberry magic.

Globe Telecom and Smart® In Motion have made available the BlackBerry® wireless platform through GlobeMobility, a unit of Globe Telecom specializing in wireless services, can plans and handset packages for corporate users. BlackBerry operates on Globe Telecom's GSM/GPRS network and its global international roaming capabilities.

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph

"But he is kind of cute. I mean, if you like tall, rugged, sandy-haired, never-clubbed-with-starving-blue-eyes-who-knows-how-to-use-a-Blackberry type" – Jane Harris, Every Boy's Got One

BOULEVARD in Ivory Black, P694.75

AVENUE in Denim Silver and Truffle Black, P874.75 each

It's in the bag

STADIUM in Black Citadel, P919.75

STADIUM in Soviet Blue, P919.75

Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by Rudy Esparas

BAGS. Need we add more adjectives and our wardrobes until its line of essentials, ultra-affordable Big Bags.

With the countless designs and color combinations available, and with prices falling under a hundred pesos, it was no big surprise that people started stashing them up like they had more than two feet.

Now, Bonnie Pearl gives us fashion freaks new reasons to whip out that cash with its new big line, which features three designs and a rainbow of colors to choose from.

AVENUE in Yellow Cab and Hudson Pink, P874.75 each

KNIND-PRINTED medium-sized pouch pendant

2BU! FASHION FREAKS

Hot looks from a sketchbook

Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by Rudy Esparas

Cherie Abes has mastered the art of creating fun and wearable masterpieces

LIKE MANY other things, it all started in the classroom.

When homebuilt Cherie Abes would find herself drawing. "It kept me quiet," she says. Friends encouraged her artistic skills and some even asking her to make hand-drawn stationery and cards that they could give to their loved ones.

Cherie's passion for art continued to grow even as the jam-packed hour student to teacher. And it was just a—it's financial art.

"I wasn't satisfied with just drawing on paper and canvas. I wanted to point on an unconventional material," she says.

The answer came to her one day while walking along Session Road. "That's when I first bought my first number of pencil pastels. I took it home and wondered if I could pen a drawing on it."

Cherie gave it a shot. The result was her first hand-painted pendant. It was a hit.

"I never in her looks. I even started getting friends to introduce when two girls on separate occasions followed me to ask where I bought it," she recalls.

It wasn't long before her friends started clamoring for her to start selling her pendants. She finally relented in November 2006, when she started drawing out pendant designs based on her sketches.

By December, without any attempts at marketing or advertising, she had sold over a hundred pendants.

"I was through sheer word of mouth. That's when I realized that there is a market for my colorful artwork," says Cherie.

Knowing that people are willing spend more than tips, Isild and she encourages to celebrate for the 27-year-old artist who used to be insecure about her craft.

Cherie is constantly creating new designs. No doubt about it, her sketchbooks will have a lot of surprises in store for us.

Call Cherie at 0917-6236868 or email abesmabel@yahoo.com.

Do you want the Fashion Freaks to visit your store or are you invited? E-mail us at thefashionfreak@yahoo.com.

GUCCI CRUISE. Grace Tiglo and Gary Dolores

VEGA POSH. Nina Morales and Greg Martin

CRUISE CAPTAINS. Malesh Miyar and Carla Tirona

BLONDIES HAVE MORE FUN. Claire Peterson and girlfriend Sarah

STAY PAST! Jenn Jimenez, office crush in Australia, but with Tim Madrigal

HOT FOUR ORIGINAL Bella Herrera and Kat

ADDICTED TO EACH OTHER. Benji Planetta and Donna Cadiente at Boni

Q STAR. Georgina Wilson, niece of Gloria Diaz, and not Maggi Wilson-Hontiveros as we wrote before.

YOUNG GUN DUNE. Mark Reyes and Trina Fragoso

Twisted sobriety

LAST week, I made no repentance.

I still stuck to my daily routine of nocturnal navigation, hopping from one revolving event to another, doing the rounds and partying hard like a rock star.

So, what's the catch? I did it—sober.

Yes, without the assistance of anything—alcohol, spice or anything that could alter my state.

I've always had a natural high. Call me a cheap date, but I remember the time when I would go out and then just a few drinks. Two glasses of wine, at the most I to last me the whole night till the next morning.

Since life is about cycles, I decided to go back to that route and see how I would fare.

The time. I tried to totally on alcohol from my system. That's not easy when it happens during my own birthday week (I call it my birthday season, because I celebrate it 20 times, spread across the whole quarter), when every, one just wants to shake it on you.

Everywhere you go in the city (if you count late enough and people are already drunk), some generous inebriated soul will surely offer you a drink, a shot or a bump.

Rest, not quit

Speaking of bumps, I recently bumped into a close partypride and told him about my experiment.

"I quit." I said in a positive tone, head lighter than Manny Pacquiao's left hook.

"Why?" he asked, incredulous.

"Because I want to," I said.

That made a lot of sense. It hit, him: the "everything in moderation" mantra. Then again, when is moderation moderate? Just like coaching for the Azkals, the imaginary line that gets hurdles the more we get closer; sometimes, people can be insatiable (naturally, all the time).

So I told myself, okay—really, get sober.

Much as I advocate the "Free Free! Free Beer! Party! Party!" lifestyle, I have my own party principles that I stick by, adhere to. For instance, I never go to or organize parties on parts of the opposite companions. And there's my other taboo: Never hog the microphone when inside the bus.

The following week was the week after the dance crazes collection launch and Vina Morales' penthouse pool party, so more on that pages. I made sure to stay away from everything—except good people.

I signed up to videoke the whole time at Imelda Mendoza's birthday party, drank some at my own birthday dinner and even had Dandy Ebalo say thanks because—under the world's cutest name—my alcoholic contrails.

The 'boring' life

I went back to the gym, slept earlier than usual (3 a.m.), and made fruit juice and diet soda my best friends.

Yes, I'm boring. But I'm also healthy, happy and sober.

Will, there is the "boring" life apparel. In an upcoming issue, another chapter, where we get invited to parties, and how I go out and "indulge" in my own fun, sans alcohol.

Knowing people are willing to spend more than tips, Isild and she encourages to celebrate for the 27-year-old artist who used to be insecure about her craft.

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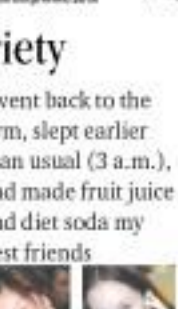
GUYS' NIGHT OUT. CJ Dee and Marcel Crespo

STAR SPECIAL. KTX Ruby Delgado, Bianca Palacio and Ariane Wong



HATED. Rob Pico Quiroz

SINGING SENSATION. Savannah Lamm is back in town!

SO HAPPY TOGETHER. Mike Hoang and girlfriend Kathy Tap

DJ IT IN THE HOUSE. Joel Tanseco at the pool party

...nana Peel's ...ew bag line ...eatures three ...esigns and a ...ainbow of colors ...o choose from

KREMLIN in Burnish Bronze and Cumaba Pink, P574.75 each

BOULEVARD in Mantra Orange and Olive Mist, P699.75 each

PENDANTS by Chona Alma, P158 each

...F COUPLE ...ans

DOCTOR LOVE. Jerna Palabyab and Raymund Rallos

HAWAIIAN punch, anyone?

...something about ...that has its own ...ersonality where ...of the rule than ...have every week ...our college buddies ...friends, co-...annual party we ...ge, (whelp), "be-...usually become a ...

...are set depen-...s of inebriates to ...ly gives a whole ...to a burst of pure ...Boy Interaktives, ...e resident virtual ...hours sober for ...hour's stopped ...gerous escapes and ...ll the flaccid lines ...

Rihanna donnates ...he decided to ren-...a dorm surrounded ...y continue to en-...

...e, who enjoys his ...survive unless any ...substance in his ...ence—whenever ...

"high flyers" guessed con to how a beautiful sky in their enhanced state—"But the sky IS beautiful!"

"It feels sooo good," chee would tell him. "But I feel good!" He'd respond.

Kapet collaborate Yuki Bliss, in her latest trip to Boracay, did a similar experience. For three days, she ran non overnething, including cutdrone and vigsavirus, and had a weird feeling that she soon realized was sobriety.

"It was awkward at first, but it made me realize that I can have fun, set manner relax, and wherever I am," she says.

I am not proselytizing. I still believe that everyone has a choice on how they would like to party and paint the town.

Discretion is always key. Everyone is entitled to his or her poison of choice, but let's not forget, it's not about how many bandes of booze you consume or how many pills your body can take.

It's about how well you can navigate life in whatever state. Knowing skill will that, in however the law of inertia, every action has an equal and opposite reaction.